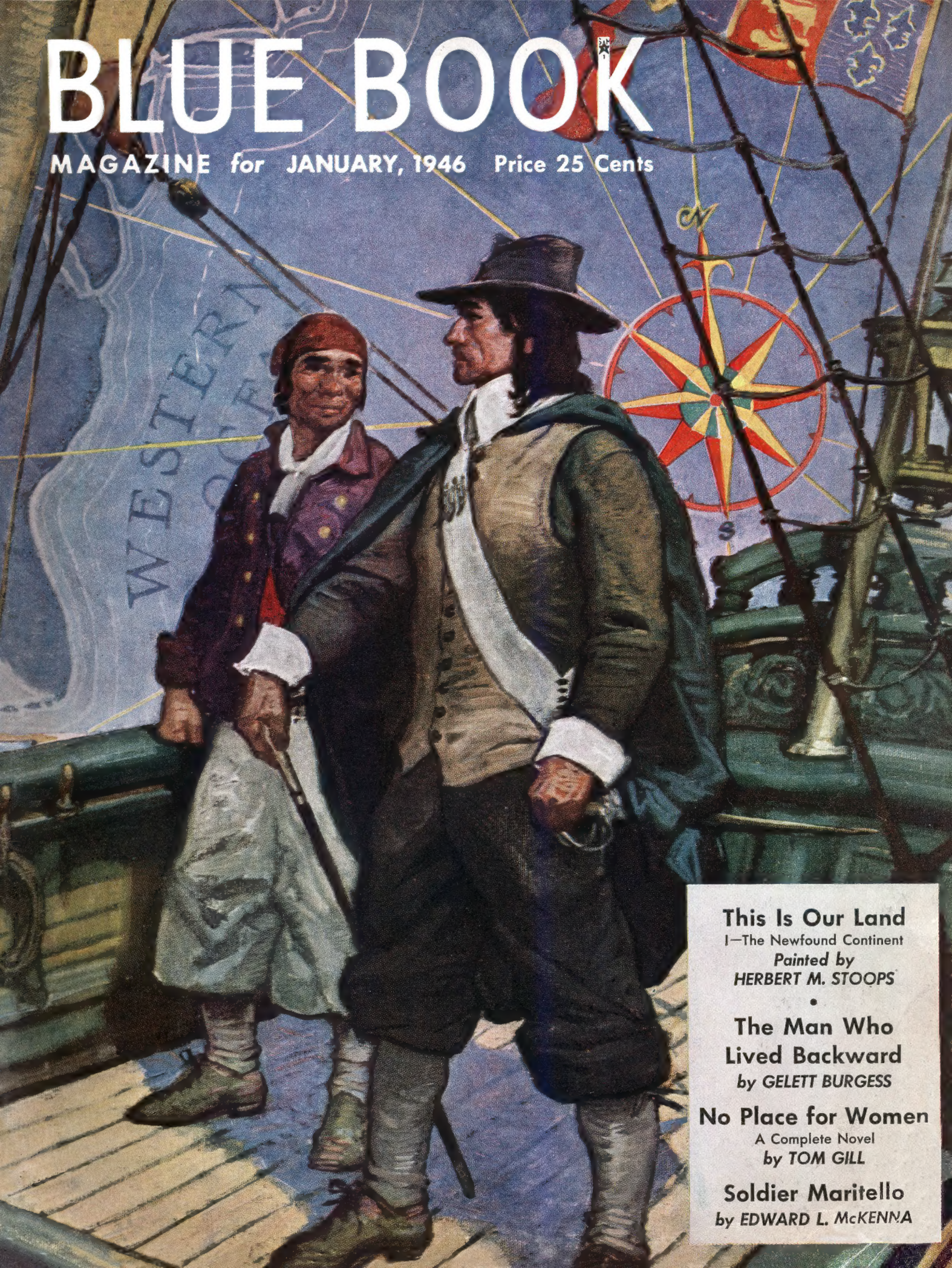
BLUE BOOK

MAGAZINE for JANUARY, 1946 Price 25 Cents



This Is Our Land
I—The Newfound Continent
Painted by
HERBERT M. STOOPS

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The Man Who Lived Backward
by GELETT BURGESS

No Place for Women
A Complete Novel
by TOM GILL

Soldier Maritello
by EDWARD L. McKENNA

Our Cover

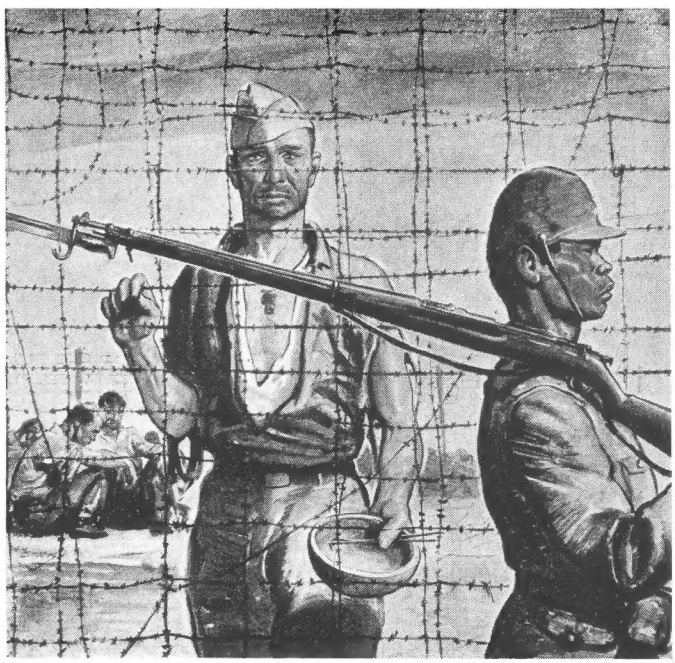
(Who's Who in this issue appears on inside back cover.)

NO man can forget the war. We would not if we could; we could not if we would—for memory writes down important events in an implacably indelible ink. . . . None the less, the war—its combat stages at least—is no longer a current event, but is taking its place in history.

During the course of this supreme event of our time, BLUE BOOK has devoted its covers as well as a portion of its contents to the war; and now that censorship restrictions permit, we propose to print some factual stories like Lt. Commander Kelly's OSS series, and on-the-spot drawings like those of Hamilton Greene and Lt. Stookie Allen. . . .

In order, however, to give you the same variety in cover subjects we have striven to offer in the rest of the book, we now are turning to a series of paintings devoted to the country many of you, and your forefathers, have fought for. "This Is Our Land" is the general title our cover artist Herbert Stoops has chosen for these paintings—paintings which will depict the development, reflect the changeful yet constant spirit, and chronicle certain significant but not commonly known episodes of our eventful past. . . . Surely no other subject more merits attention than America itself: "The Last Best Hope of Earth," was Lincoln's phrase for it. . . . We begin this series, naturally, with the arrival of the first settlers upon this "Terra Incognita."

A word as to the painter himself: Herbert Stoops was born and raised on an Idaho ranch, went to college in Utah, worked as a newspaper artist in San Francisco and Chicago until World War 1. In that conflict he served in France with the First Division as an artillery officer. In this war he has done his bit by painting a number of the well-known war-bond posters. We reproduce two of them herewith, along with his medal-winning painting of refugees, "Anno Domini, 1940."



"The Rice Bowl"

"Anno Domini, 1940"

At left: "The Man for Whom the War is Never Over."

A snapshot of Herbert M. Stoops made in France, 1918.

Readers' Comment*

A Veteran's Page—or Pages?

AS a wounded member of the infantry on Okinawa, I would like to make a suggestion.

Why not have a veterans' page in your magazine? I'm sure it would meet with interest from the start. Especially as your magazine is one that is and will be read principally by men who see, in the stories in your magazine, themselves and their own experiences.

Pfc. Harold Power

Homer Nodded—and So Did We

THE October BLUE BOOK *contains the usual finely balanced selection of stories. My choice for the best fiction of the month is Philip Wylie's novel, "The Paradise Crater."*

For although he was twenty years late in developing the atomic bomb, his pictures of life and living of that future date might well be an accurate one. BLUE BOOK *deserves credit for bringing this burning topic to the attention of its readers in such a palatable form.*

As a Californian I'm just a bit nettled about Wylie's grandiose visions of Miami's future. And he must've been in a hurry to go fishing when he got near the end, for he wrote: "It was Leap Year. Just—1965." The calendar schedules Leap Year for 1964.

Carl C. Nielsen.

Posies for Bedford-Jones

JUST a line or two to express my appreciation of the enjoyment BLUE BOOK *has afforded me during my three years overseas.*

I read my last issue in the States in November '42 just before shipping over, and did not see this old friend again till I bumped into a piece of shrapnel at Anzio. While in the hospital, I became reacquainted with BLUE BOOK *and wrote my mother to send a batch of back issues and also the latest ones.*

Incidentally, a whole load of posies should go to H. Bedford-Jones for his stories "Grotto of the Nymphs" and "Wing of the Lion." These tales really have authenticity, as do all of your stories. Having been to most of the places mentioned in them, I should know.

*It will be like old times again to walk to the corner newsstand and say "*BLUE BOOK, *please!"*

Pvt. Murray T. Pringle.

BLUE BOOK

January, 1946 **MAGAZINE** Vol. 82, No. 3

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Except for articles and stories of Real Experience, all stories and novels printed herein are fiction and are intended as such. They do not refer to real characters or to actual events. If the name of any living person is used, it is a coincidence.

DONALD KENNICOTT, *Editor*

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"Child of the Devil" some called this man who reversed nature's rule and grew younger. . . . A weird and fascinating story—

by GELETT BURGESS

The Man

Late October, it was—yes, Allhallow Eve, now I remember—that my Hungarian friend Dr. Kojer rang me up and asked me to come over to his place as soon as I possibly could.

"There is a woman here I want you to meet," he said. "But please don't ask any questions or make any definite statements or denials while she is here." And he told me he would explain later.

Dr. Kojer was much older than I; he was gruff and sarcastic; but I liked his scientific talk and sense of humor.

He liked me, I imagine, mainly because he found me a good listener.

The doctor was a specialist in pathology and did considerable consultative work, at enormous fees, but he saw few patients of his own. Most of his time was spent in private research—embryology, I believe, and biochemistry. Anyway, he kept a lot of rats and rabbits and even insects in the laboratory back of the living-rooms in his penthouse on the roof of a Park Avenue apartment building.

Kojer had become prominent a few years ago as one of the discoverers of the so-called chemical "inductor" which causes organs to change their form to that of transplanted tissues. He used to tell me that he could produce a rabbit with horns by such transformation of the cartilage of the ears. He was working too, I believe, on the rejuvenation of decayed teeth by a similar inductor process—something he needed badly himself.

Kojer was built like an oak tree—rugged trunk and thick limbs. His heavy black hair and heavy black mustache made him look something like Stalin, the peasant type; only, Stalin hasn't such black teeth.

As I live near by, I was over at his place within fifteen minutes. I had to wait awhile, though, after all. I sat down in his modernistic waiting-room and picked up a magazine. . . . The office door finally opened. The Doctor ushered out an elderly, handsome, white-haired woman, followed by a Negro maid with a baby in her arms. The elderly woman had sharp, aristocratic features; and despite her old-fashioned blue gown to her ankles, she was a figure of distinction.

The Doctor perplexed me by introducing me as his assistant, and said I might be able to help Mrs. [illegible] he was studying her case. It was like a scene in a movie where I was an actor who knew nothing of the continuity. I mumbled something, and wondered what was the matter with that baby. It had the strangest strained expression, and it gazed at me with an intensity that was disconcerting.

The old lady, however, didn't seem much interested in me. She directed the maid to wait in the foyer, and her look was agonized as she turned immediately to Dr. Kojer.

"But you will operate, Doctor, won't you? You must do something, and very soon. There's such a short time

They asked me about Mrs. Keaf. I made vague replies, wondering at their manner.

Who Lived Backward

left—only a few weeks. Oh, Doctor, I beg of you! I'm desperate. I don't know what will happen if—" And she began to sob.

Dr. Kojer said: "All right, Mrs. Keaf, all right. I'll see what I can do." And he led her gently toward the door and closed it slowly behind her.

He came back to me with a queer look on his face, and stood with his hands in his pockets, nodding his head.

"How old would you say that baby was?" he asked me.

I said I didn't know much about babies. Six weeks or so, I thought.

The Doctor slowly took a pipe from his pocket, filled it, lighted it. Then he said, watching me with a quizzical look:

"That child was born in 1785—at least, that's what I'm told."

"1785!" I supposed it m
of his jokes. "Why, th

him—let's see—one hundred and sixty years old," I said.

The Doctor grinned and nodded. "And to make it more interesting, that baby is worth some twenty millions."

I didn't know how to take it. "You mean," I said, "that he has inherited all that money?"

"No," said Dr. Kojer, "he is said to have earned it himself, dealing in real estate." And he asked me if I had ever heard of the Wicet Realty Corporation.

I knew that the company owned almost as much land in New York as the Astor estate; and I said, still uncertain what he meant, that the child might perhaps be the great-grandson, or even great-great-grandson of the original Levi Wicet, who founded the company.

DR. KOJER still had that enigmatical smile. "That child *is* the original Levi," he said. "I have Mrs. Keaf's word for it."

The idea was ridiculous. I laughed and said: "Then why isn't he an old man instead of a baby?"

"That's just what I'd like to know," said the Doctor. And he informed me that the Wicet Corporation had been kept in the family for over a hundred years, and was now controlled by three of Levi's great-great-grandsons, three brothers. "And that's another queer twist to the Wicet story," he added. "Levi's descendants have always named their sons anagrams of Levi."

"Anagrams?" I said, and I laughed, and said that then probably one of them must have been named *Evil*.

"That is so," said the Doctor; "only, they accent it on the last syllable, Eveel. Their father's name was *Vile*, pronounced *Veelay*. Further back in the family line, I am told, were *Viel, Ivel, Eliv, Ilev* and *Elvi*. They are certainly proud of old Levi."

"Who," I said, "you tell me is young Levi." Doctor Kojer grinned and showed his blackened teeth. I was impatient at this mystification. "It's impossible!" I said.

The Doctor chuckled and then took me into his office, the walls of which were lined with books. We had had many interesting talks there. I dropped into a red leather chair, and he sat down behind his flat-topped desk, leaned back, took off his tortoiseshell goggles and cleaned them carefully.

"A man's scientific education," he said in a professorial tone, "is said to be gauged by the way he uses the word *impossible*. I have a book here with some four thousand engravings. They are illustrations of the microscopic exploration of every part of the human corners of the earth, my dear sir, has been child's play, compared with the investigation of man's body and the operation of his organs. We have as yet hardly done more than to guess at the mysteries of anatomy, function, repair and growth. Why, chemical histology, as late as 1875 was regarded as a vague, unprofitable theorizing. Even Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes had to wait twenty-five years to have the simplest theories of antiseptic surgery accepted. The X-ray though, radium, vitamins and hormones, television and the exploded atom all show that we've only begun to understand nature, and that new discoveries will continue to amaze us. The story of this baby appears preposterous at first sight, I admit; but it may possibly open up a new field of research—who knows? You can't reject anything as incredible, nowadays."

"Well," I said, impatiently, "then let's have the fairy-tale."

"Mrs. Keaf," said the Doctor, "asserts that the baby, Levi Wicet, is living backward, so to speak, and has been for the past eighty years. Growing younger, that is, every day."

I said that, so far as I knew, there was nothing in natural science that

Her look was agonized as she turned to Dr. Kojer.

"There's such a short time left! Oh, Doctor, I don't know what will happen if—"

suggested the possibility of such a regression, or devolution.

Dr. Kojer knocked the ashes out of his pipe and refilled it. "What would you say," he said between puffs, as he lit it, "if a mother were born after her daughter?" And he grinned whimsically at me.

"I'd say it was impossible," I answered.

The Doctor laughed. "There you go again, you scientific ignoramus! Well, now, consider the lowly aphides, commonly known as plant lice."

"Yes, I know," said I. "They serve as cows for the ants to milk."

He nodded. "After a first fertilization by the male," he said, "the females go on all summer producing young females, one after the other parthenogenetically, by a process like internal budding. And the young begin to produce daughters immediately, and so on and on, and so rapidly that if there is any complication which retards a mother's birth, her daughter goes right ahead and is born first. It's a fairly frequent occurrence in insect life."

It was a paradox new to me, and I laughed and said that many a woman would be glad to be younger than her daughter. Then I said: "Does all that mean that you believe that baby is one hundred and sixty years old, Dr. Kojer?"

He gazed up at the ceiling. "Mrs. Keaf brought the child here first about a year ago," he said. "It had few teeth and weighed about twenty pounds. It looked to be about fourteen months old."

I asked him if he was sure it was the same baby as the one she brought today.

"I thought then," said the Doctor, "that she was probably insane, and I really never expected to see her again,

I said I wished to inquire about Mrs. Keaf. "I saw her yesterday." "What?" he exclaimed. "Where did you see her?"

or I'd undoubtedly have taken the kid's fingerprints."

"Well," I said, "suppose, for the sake of the argument, that the child *is* actually getting younger every day. What'll happen when he's only one day old?"

"That's what's tormenting the poor lady," the Doctor said. "Levi Wicet is said to have been born Dec. 1st, 1785. And Dec. 1st, 1945, is only a few weeks off. Do you wonder that I am a bit interested? I thought that you, too, as a writer, might be interested."

"What does she want you to do?" I asked. "She spoke of an operation. Perhaps she has some idea of doing something with the pituitary gland. That's supposed to regulate growth, isn't it? Is it ever operated on?"

Dr. Kojer grunted. "Take it out, you mean, and sew it back again upside down onto the infundibulum? Though how you're going to get at it would be a problem. It's way down inside the skull, you know—not to mention operating on a month-old baby. Mrs. Keaf may have some thought of hormones—or radium, for all I know. She's been to pediatricians all over—here and abroad, and they've all laughed at her."

"And you didn't?"

"I only laugh at my own jokes," he said, with a grin. And then he told me the story Mrs. Keaf had told him.

LEVI WICET, she'd said, came to this country in the year 1800, when he was fifteen, with his parents, who were Dutch. They bought a farm on Lenox Hill, then in the country a few miles out of New York. After Levi had served in the War of 1812 as a marine on board the sloop-of-war *Hornet,* he went into business, buying real estate on the outskirts of town and turning them into profits as New York grew northward. He married, and twenty years later took his son into partnership. They were shrewd dealers and made money hand over fist. At the age of seventy, Levi retired from the business, immensely rich. Mrs. Keaf says he traveled abroad a good deal, and it was in 1865, when he was eighty, she says, that the strange thing happened which was to make him different from any human being who had ever lived. In Vienna he fell down some stairs, and was taken to a private hospital.

Just what took place there Levi never knew. He was unconscious when he arrived, and wasn't aware of what treatment was given him during his stay. All he could remember, when he told the story to Mrs. Keaf, forty-five years later, was that a strange-looking doctor named Santa, with a hooked nose and black beard, and dressed always in black, seemed to take great interest in his case and kept coming to see him after he had left the hospital. Levi assumed that his skull had been fractured; but as he improved steadily, he made no effort to find out what had been done. He knew, though, that he felt better than he had for years.

"BUT who is this Mrs. Keaf?" I asked, "and how does she happen to have the baby?"

Dr. Kojer didn't know exactly what her relation was to Levi Wicet. She told him that she had first met Levi when she was thirty years old. He told her at that time that he was thirty-five; but that was, of course, his regressive age. In point of fact, he was then actually one hundred and twenty-five. Mrs. Keaf didn't see him again till he came to her fifteen years ago.

"Being then one hundred and forty-five years old," I remarked.

"But," said the Doctor, "being, regressively, a boy of fifteen and terrified as to what was happening to him. She has taken care of him ever since."

I asked the Doctor how I came into it, and what he wanted me to do.

The Doctor became more serious then, and he explained that his discoveries and the disputes about the priority of them over other claimants in the matter of the much-discussed "inductor" tissue, had aroused considerable jealousy and rancor amongst his colleagues. They had denied his theories and questioned his experiments. And so he suspected that this regressive-baby story might be a kind of hoax arranged to make a fool of him. The woman, he said, might have been hired by his professional rivals to lead his curiosity on, and told to bring a different baby the second time, and they hoped he might betray his credulity and lack of scientific insight by taking her seriously and following up the case. And so, he said, he preferred not to see Mrs. Keaf again; but the mystery was otherwise so provocative that he would like me to keep track of the child and report to him.

Well, the idea was too fascinating to refuse; and I agreed to undertake the

mission; then his telephone bell rang, and he was asked to go to Hoboken on an urgent consultation, and he had to hurry right off. He said he'd give me further details about Mrs. Keaf the next day.

When I got back home that afternoon I couldn't get the darned thing out of my mind. If the story were true—which of course it couldn't be, I thought—just when, I wondered, did Levi Wicet first discover that he was growing younger? Many men of eighty are as hale and vigorous as others at seventy, and so he mightn't have realized for ten years that he was regressing, perhaps even not for twenty years. He would then feel and appear like a man of sixty; but knowing that he was actually one hundred years old, wouldn't he be then convinced that something uncanny had happened to him? At eighty, too, he must have been either bald or gray; but as his hair came in again or darkened, he might have thought it merely an extraordinary rejuvenation without suspecting that he was living backward.

When he had got back to fifty, however, he must have been sure and he must have begun to dread the exposure of his state to his acquaintances. What could they think of him, knowing him to be one hundred and ten years old? At that venerable age men don't travel, dance, play tennis, or do any of the things he must have felt capable of doing. How could he rejoice in his new lease of life if he became notorious as a phenomenon? But how could he keep his monstrous secret? Such speculations kept me awake most of the night, and I got up determined to find out what I could for myself and as soon as possible.

WHEN I phoned in the morning, Dr. Kojer's nurse told me that he hadn't yet returned, and she couldn't reach him as he had already left the hospital where the consultation had taken place.

I asked her then if she could give me the address of Mrs. Keaf whom I had met in the Doctor's office.

"I'm sorry," she said, "but I haven't it in my file. But perhaps I can find it among the papers in the Doctor's desk and you might call me back later."

But somehow I couldn't wait. The thing had so got hold of me that in the forenoon I went downtown to the office of the Wicet Realty Corporation, and asked to see one of the partners—any one of them. After I had sent in my card, the girl returned to ask me what I wanted to see Mr. Wicet about. I told her it was concerning a Mrs. Keaf, and she returned and immediately showed me into a spacious mahogany-paneled room with heavy Oriental rugs that made it seem more like a luxurious home than an office. In the center of one wall was the portrait of a handsome white-haired gentleman in a black stock and wide stand-up collar, a costume of the 1850's. And directly under it seated at a huge glass-topped desk was Mr. Ilve Wicet, who somewhat resembled the portrait. The same high, narrow forehead and bushy eyebrows, the same tight crooked line of the mouth. His face was harder, though, and more ingrowing. Without rising he pointed with a pencil to a chair.

I said that I wished to inquire about Mrs. Keaf, who was, I understood, a relative of his.

He said: "Oh, Aunt Avelia, I suppose you mean. What about her?"

"Could you tell me where she lives?" I asked.

He pursed his lips and inspected me for a moment. "I have no idea," he said. "I haven't seen her for years." He put the tips of his fingers together. "Aunt Avelia should be about seventy, now, if indeed she is still living."

"I saw her yesterday," I said.

"What?" he exclaimed, and an expression of anxiety came into his hard, cold face. "Where did you see her, may I ask?"

When I had told him about meeting her in Dr. Kojer's office, he held up a finger. "Wait a minute, please." And he spoke into an inter-office telephone, asking that "Mr. Vlei" come immediately. Then he informed me, with a somewhat more gracious manner, that the family had been trying for some time to locate Mrs. Keaf, as it was necessary to see her on important business.

MR. VLEI WICET, when he came in, I found to be short, stout and evidently younger than Ilve; but he had the same tight-lipped look. He stood facing me, twiddling a card in his fingers while the two brothers questioned me. They asked about Mrs. Keaf's appearance and if she seemed ill—or, they hinted, perhaps a bit mentally unbalanced? I made vague replies, wondering at their manner which implied more than a mere interest in an elderly relative. They seemed somewhat angry, I thought, or at least disturbed. The elder brother, Ilve, still sat at his desk rubbing his chin. Finally he asked in a casual enough tone:

"Was Mrs. Keaf alone?"

I didn't like either of the men, and I suspected them of—I don't know what. But I decided to see what would come of it anyway, and so I told them that Mrs. Keaf had had a baby with her.

Ilve looked at his brother Vlei meaningly, and asked how old a child.

I said about six weeks, and they both scowled.

Vlei said something to Ilve in a low tone; and then, after thanking me for my information, he rose, indicating

She thought she had seen Satan; he was that black-bearded man who had called at the house on a pretended errand.

clearly enough that the interview was at an end.

I lingered long enough, however, to speak of the portrait over his head. I said it was evidently by a master, and asked if it was perhaps an ancestor.

Ilve glanced up at it. "Levi Wicet," he said, "my great-great-grandfather, the founder of this company."

I remarked, inanely enough, but I was watching him closely, that the handsome old gentleman must have lived a long time ago.

"Of course," said Vlei, "naturally. He died in 1885, just after his hundredth birthday."

Ilve was still standing, tapping the desk with his fingers a bit nervously. He nodded assent and they said nothing more. In the rather awkward pause I took my leave.

IN the outer waiting-room a man was sitting in a chair. Something about him attracted my attention—something queer. I didn't know what it was till I suddenly recalled what Dr. Kojer had told me about that Viennese surgeon, Dr. Santa, who was supposed to have treated Levi Wicet after his accident, back in 1865. A strange man, Levi had said, with a hooked nose and a black spade beard, and who always dressed in black. It was a mere coincidence of course; but this foreign-looking man, curiously enough, answered perfectly to that description. With his saturnine and rather sinister smile, as he sat there stiffly, he had, somehow, a peculiar magnetism as of some suppressed power. I said to myself, as I went out, that in the proper costume and make-up, I could imagine him playing the part of *Mephistopheles* in "Faust." He seemed, by the way the receptionist girl treated him, to be a messenger of some sort. She called him Elvid.

In the afternoon I phoned again to Dr. Kojer's office. His nurse told me that he hadn't yet come in, and she was a little nervous about him. She had found the address of Mrs. Keaf, though; it was out in Riverdale. She wasn't listed in the telephone directory, but probably had a private number, as she seemed to be very well off. Then the nurse added something that worried me a little:

"A Mr. Wicet," she said, "of the Wicet Realty Corporation, rang me up a little while ago, and he asked for Mrs. Keaf's address, too."

"You didn't give it to him, did you?" I asked.

She hesitated and seemed embarrassed. "Why, yes, I did," she said. "He told me Mrs. Keaf was a near relative of his. Wasn't it all right to give the address?"

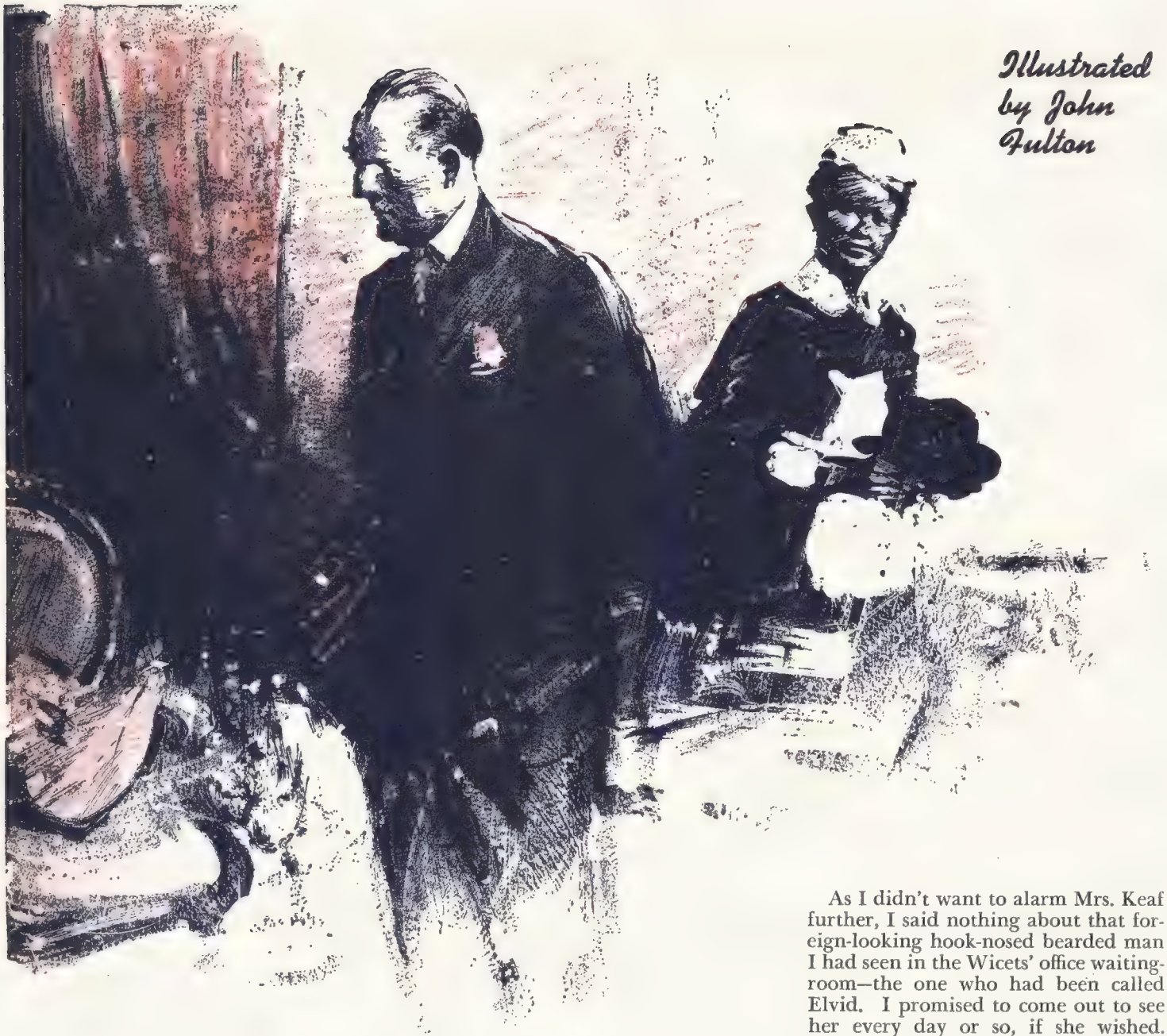
Well, after all, it was really none of my affair, and I knew nothing about the man. So I said, "All right," but I decided to lose no time getting out to Riverdale to see the old lady. I was detained, however by a caller—he wanted to publish my next book—and I put the matter off till I could get a little work done on my manuscript.

The next morning when I took up my paper I was shocked to read of an automobile accident in which Dr. Kojer had been killed in Jersey City. And so it wasn't until after his funeral that I found the time to go to Riverdale.

"Perhaps I'm a bit superstitious," the old lady confessed, "but I feel that man's coming as—well, as an evil sign of some kind."

Mrs. Keaf lived in an old yellow two-story Colonial house with columns and a wide portico back from a garden above the street. It was a dignified mansion amongst the elms that you might notice and think looked rather romantic.

I was shown by the Negro maid into a beautiful little white-and-gold reception room, and there I found the old lady, very straight, very correct and



Illustrated by John Fulton

aristocratic, in lavender and lace. She was in a highly nervous state. She had heard of Dr. Kojer's death, and she said she was hoping I would come. Except for her two servants, she was alone with the baby; and she seemed to want a man's company and advice to support her in what she said was a mysterious danger she feared was imminent. And then she told me something that somewhat disturbed me also.

A man had called that forenoon, she said, to inquire about somebody named Taylor. She was sure that it was a mere excuse to see her, or perhaps the baby.

"Perhaps I'm a bit superstitious," the old lady confessed, " but I feel that man's coming as—well, as an evil sign of some kind. You know, I didn't tell Dr. Kojer, but there's a tradition in the Wicet family that the original Levi —my baby here—was not really the son of the man he called father. That man, Phyno Wicet, lived with his wife—they had no children—in Antwerp. Well, one dark, stormy night, so the story runs, the Wicets were coming home from church in the rain when an old man stopped them on a corner by the cathedral. He had a hooked nose and a black beard, and he was all in black —a strange-looking man; and he carried a baby, wrapped up, in his arms. He went up to Frau Wicet, put the baby in her arms and said, 'Keep him till I come,' and then disappeared. Well, the couple grew fond of the child—and he was apparently only a few days old—and adopted him, giving him the name Levi. The little boy, they say, had a will of his own, when he grew larger; and when it clashed with his father's, old Phyno would call him a child of the Devil."

As I didn't want to alarm Mrs. Keaf further, I said nothing about that foreign-looking hook-nosed bearded man I had seen in the Wicets' office waiting-room—the one who had been called Elvid. I promised to come out to see her every day or so, if she wished. There was a stable on the place where she kept an ancient Pierce-Arrow, and it was there I kept my own car when I called. Her two servants lived in an upper floor of the stable.

MRS. KEAF seemed grateful for my sympathy; Levi's birthday was rapidly approaching, and she dreaded what might happen. Her suspense was the harder to bear because although December 1st was called his birthday, the exact date was of course unknown, as he was a kind of foundling. It might be a week or so earlier or later.

It wasn't merely a terror of the supernatural, however, that was haunting the old lady. She was afraid of her nephews, Ilve, Vlei and Evil.

"For a long time," she said, "they have been fearing an exposure of the fact that Levi is still alive. They know it would make an unconscionable amount of talk. If the papers got hold

of the story, you can imagine what they would do with it. It would be a sensation that might even ruin their business, and Vlei's political chances, for he is now trying for election as Senator." And Mrs. Keaf went on to tell me that back in 1885 that the Wicets had held a family conclave and discussed the anomalous position in which they were placed. Levi was then one hundred years old, but seemed only sixty, and was unmistakably growing younger all the time. And so he agreed to disappear and live abroad, and even have himself reported dead.

"I would never have anything to do with my nephews," Mrs. Keaf said; "I despise them. But after Levi came to me for protection, fifteen years ago, they must have heard of it somehow. They have written to me repeatedly, but I never answered. They have tried to see me—they have even accused me of having an illegitimate child. They have offered me money to give Levi up to them. They offered first twenty-five thousand dollars, then one hundred thousand. I don't need to tell you, I'm sure, that nothing they could offer me would be the slightest temptation for me to part with Levi; but in any case what money I have of my own, not to speak of what he brought me, is more than sufficient for us."

She put her handkerchief to her eyes. "What they would do with the child," she said brokenly, "if they had him, I can't imagine. I don't think of it. . . . So far, I have managed to keep my whereabouts secret from them. But if Levi should die"—and here poor Mrs. Keaf almost broke down—"I don't know what investigations would be made by the authorities, or how they'd take my explanation. And all that publicity, I suppose, is what my nephews are anxious to avoid. But if I should die—oh, I don't know, I don't know what would become of—" And then she was sobbing pitifully.

THE last thing I'd have wished was to become involved in a family affair like this, but the old lady's anxiety and distress impelled me to give up my work and devote most of my time to her in Riverdale. She seemed pathetically grateful at having some one to share her trouble, and was relieved somewhat in being able to talk about it. And so it was in our conversations during those sad November days that, bit by bit, I was able to patch together most of the epic of Levi Wicet's strange life, and her own brief part in it.

She must have been beautiful when she was young, for, with the shy, pathetic vanity of a woman who has lost her looks, she mentioned that she had been chosen to lead the daisy chain procession at her Vassar graduation. She was soon married to a wealthy broker, Rial Keaf, and soon made a widow. She was thirty when she took a trip abroad.

It was in Paris, at one of those gay, bustling, cosmopolitan sidewalk cafés on the Avenue des Champs Elysées that she was introduced, one June afternoon, to a handsome, spirited and clever chap known as Monsieur Salia. There must have been something in his air and glances that day more potent than the *apéritif* she sipped, for she hadn't met him many times—he followed her persistently—before she was calling him by his first name, Dirth, and she was soon head over heels in love with him, and he with her. He was at that time, so he told her, thirty-five years old. In a month they were engaged to be married. Avelia and he lived in the clouds.

And then came sudden disaster to all her hopes of happiness. One night, after a day of amorous intoxication, he confessed to her that Salia was an assumed name. He felt her deep sympathy and he longed for a confidant. He told her the story of his mysterious treatment in Vienna—then forty-five years ago—and how he had since then steadily grown younger. But it wasn't only the fact, atrocious though it was, that he was actually one hundred and twenty-five years old, that appalled her.

It was the discovery, when he had told her his real name was Levi Wicet (her maiden name was Avelia Wicet), that this charming, handsome young man she loved was her great-grandfather. Ridiculous though it may sound, the situation was to her shocking. It was sickening. He was the lover of her dreams suddenly made horrible. Every hope for happiness she had had was blasted. She hardly dared touch his hand.

"Levi kept insisting," she told me tearfully one day, as we sat watching the baby (the very person she was talking of) "that our consanguinity was too slight to matter. He said that first cousins could marry although they had fifty per cent of the same blood, while I had only one-eighth of his. But to me," she said, "it was unnatural, it was sinful; I couldn't even think of it. We had a desperate time of it; my heart was broken—for I loved him, oh, I loved him so! I couldn't help loving him, even when I knew. But finally I broke away from him and came home. I didn't see him again for nineteen years."

I said, I remember, that apart from the blood relationship, the idea of seeing him steadily grow younger would have been unbearable. In ten years when she was forty, he would have been twenty-five. And in ten years more, when she was fifty, he would be only fifteen.

"Oh, it wasn't that," Mrs. Keaf protested. "I would have been glad to protect and comfort him, for I knew how he was suffering and would suffer, more and more. Do you realize what that child there has been through? It's bad enough to grow old, I know that well enough—to lose your looks and charm and vigor, year by year. But to know that you're growing *younger* all the time, inevitably, to feel something terrible coming, you don't know what, but certainly helplessness, dependence on others, and your mind growing childish—and then infancy—and then what? It must have been terrifying to him. Even when he came to me, when he was back to fifteen, when he was too young to realize what was happening to him, it was horrible. It is horrible even now that he is a baby. I can hardly bear to look at him. He seems to sense that something is wrong."

AND then she told me more of Levi Wicet's strange history. After that family council in 1885, when he was a hundred years old, Levi went to England, he had told Avelia, where for ten years he led a gayish life in a Surrey country house he had bought. He knew that if it were known that he was a centenarian he would become unpleasantly notorious and so, apparently in his fifties, he adopted the name of Eli Busgo and avoided all his former English friends.

One day in 1890 a dissolute young man, Live Wicet, met this charming Mr. Busgo at a hunt party in a house near Betchworth. That night, after several rounds of drinks he said to a girl he was pursuing, "By Jove, think of the old beggar riding to hounds at a hundred and five! How do I know?" he snickered. "Why, he's my own great-great-grandfather, by Jove." The girl told an intimate friend, and the tale soon spread all over the country.

Levi, alarmed at the rumor, moved to Vienna where he hoped to escape notice. There he changed his name again and his family being traditionally fond of anagrams, he was there known as Count Lei Felsa. In Vienna, he afterwards told Avelia, he tried to find Dr. Santa, but as it was then some thirty-five years since the Doctor had treated him, it wasn't surprising that his quest was fruitless.

Levi was a rich man. To avoid being traced or identified through banking offices he had converted his entire fortune into U. S. Government coupon bonds. In Vienna he must have begun fully to realize the fate that was upon him, and he sought to forget it in gayety and pleasure. The first year there, he told Avelia, he spent over two million dollars. In appearance and in temperament he was now a man in his forties, and since he was

handsome, distinguished and prodigal, as time passed even his new friends began to comment on his strangely changeless appearance.

In a gambling casino, one day, where Levi often played heavily, an old Englishman, bald and feeble, tottering on a cane, said to him:

"My word, sir, aren't you Mr. Busgo? I used to know you in Dorking, remember? You bought some of my Tamworth pigs. By gad, sir, you look twenty years younger than you did then. How d'you do it?"

Levi said, coldly, "My name, sir, is Lei Felsa. I'm sorry to say I don't know you."

And that week he packed up and moved to Paris, where some ten years later he met the beautiful Avelia. . . .

After that unhappy love affair, doubly tragic for Levi who was in such dire need of a friend and confidant, he seems for several years to have plunged into the most remarkable dissipation and extravagance. He wandered all over the world seeking distraction and forgetfulness of his doom. Avelia received letters from him, she told me, from India, from South Africa and the Argentine. When the first World War broke out in 1914, he engaged as a driver in the American Ambulance Corps under the name of Eli Drauf, in the hope, he wrote Avelia, that he would be killed. He had given his age as twenty-nine, and he displayed such daring and devotion to duty, even foolhardiness under fire that it was impossible to suspect that he was, in reality, a man of one hundred and twenty-nine. In 1920 he wrote to Avelia:

When I think of what may happen—will certainly happen—in the coming years it seems to me that my only course should be suicide—if, indeed, I don't perish of loneliness. Now, when I am in what should be a glorious renewal of my youth, with the ardor and energy of a man of twenty-five, with all a young man's emotions and desires and ambitions, and money for any kind of pleasure, the men all friendly and the women all fond—all is dust and ashes in my mouth. How shall I live when I get back to boyhood, to childhood, to infancy? How shall I conceal the fact that I am a monstrosity and a marvel for all to wonder at, to talk about, perhaps to jeer at?

It was not till he had regressed to the age of fifteen, however, that he appealed to Avelia, the only one whom he could trust to keep his secret. Levi was in a sorry plight. His teeth, he found, were reversing their original development, and gradually receding into the gums. And as his first teeth had of course gone when he was a child, he was forced to live on milk and soft foods, and found it was growing harder to speak distinctly. He had tried, he wrote her, to have dentures made to fit his little mouth, but as he appeared to be a normal adolescent, dentists had only laughed at him, patted him on the shoulder and told him to be patient till his second teeth appeared.

As he sat there stiffly, he had, somehow, a peculiar magnetism as of some suppressed power.

One day, in 1930, it was, while Avelia Keaf was living in Brookline, Mass., she answered the doorbell to find a weeping, wretched boy of fifteen asking for refuge. His memory of the past was growing faint but he still had intelligence to understand his deplorable condition. He had with him in a bag a bundle of United States bonds, some of them long past maturity.

Avelia still loved him, but it was now a kind of maternal love based on pity. From then on he lived with her and was passed off as her adopted son.

There were a few years of melancholy happiness for the two. "Until he had got back to five years old," she told me, "he was constantly asking me what was the matter with him and why he was growing smaller all the time. I had to prevent his going with other children who might have discovered that there was something queer about him and talk about him, and he had a lonely time of it."

Ilve and Vlei Wicet managed, after a while, to learn where Avelia lived and that she had little Levi with her. From that time on she led a life of anxiety and dread. "We moved from Brookline to Philadelphia," she told me, "and then to Washington, for I was always hoping that in some new city I'd be able to find some doctor who could solve the mystery of Levi's case. But my nephews always found out, somehow, after a while, where I was and I had to move again."

I ASKED her if there was any possibility of the Wicets going to law to get possession of the child.

"Oh, no, I think not," she said. "They would be afraid to, for then the whole story would have to come out. Anyway, neither of us can establish any legal claim to guardianship. We can't even prove his identity. He has no papers, and I doubt if his own testimony—that is, when he was still able to talk intelligently—would have been accepted as valid."

As the days passed Avelia grew more nervous and overwrought. I myself was somewhat uneasy because, one day, while driving out to Riverdale, I had passed, just before I got to Mrs. Keaf's house, an old-fashioned Ford closed coupé, one of those square-front model T's you haven't seen for years. It was coming in toward New York, and in it I had seen, or thought I had seen, driving it, a man in a black beard unpleasantly like that strange-looking man Elvid, I had seen in the waiting-room of the Wicets' office. It disturbed

me so, in fact, that I took one of Mrs. Keaf's guestrooms to stay with her there for a while, greatly to her relief. I saw the baby, of course, every day, an unhappy little creature, I thought, almost always crying, and by the end of November it was evident that little Levi had grown noticeably smaller. By the 28th we found he now weighed only ten pounds.

The baby slept in a cot bed in the same room with Mrs. Keaf, who hardly left him out of her sight, and as the first of December drew near she was exhausted and miserable from her vigil. It was all I could do to keep up her spirits—in fact it was all I could do to pretend to be cheerful myself in that strain of waiting for—what?

ONE night Avelia and I were sitting in a little sewing-room between the room I occupied and her bedroom where little Levi was sleeping. All the afternoon the sky had been overcast with heavy dark clouds; it was what, in California, they call "earthquake weather," close and lowering; and toward nine o'clock a thunderstorm had broken over the house. Avelia sat by the window looking out gloomily through the swaying branches of the trees into the darkness and the pouring rain.

"It always reminds me of *Paradise Lost,*" she said, "the thunder and lightning and the wind. " 'The floors of heaven ring to the roar of an angel onset!' " she quoted. "Milton must have believed in the powers of darkness," she said, "or he couldn't have described so well the fall of Lucifer to the bottomless pit, to become the ruler of Hell." Then she looked at me with a queer expression, and asked me if I believed in a personal Satan.

I told her that I considered him merely as symbolic of the evil part of human nature.

"But they believed in him in the Middle Ages," she said. "Didn't they have carved gargoyles and devils and imps on all the cathedrals? They thought that the Evil One was almost as powerful as God, and tried that way to propitiate him." And then she half-laughed nervously and asked me if I thought she was losing her mind.

I reassured her as well as I could and then she told me seriously that she thought she had seen Satan himself. He was that black-bearded man who had called at the house on a pretended errand, she said. I tried to laugh it off, but she sat there shaking her head in silence.

Suddenly, she asked me if I had ever heard of the Wandering Jew.

Of course I knew the legend of Cartaphilus (Ahasuerus, she corrected me), who had reviled Jesus as he was led out to execution, and to whom the Christ had said, "Thou shalt walk the earth till my return." And Avelia said she believed the Jew was really Satan and he was still wandering on among men and creating evil.

There was an exceptionally vivid flash of lightning just then, and through the crashing reverberations of the thunder and the slashing of the rain against the windowpanes I heard her cry, hysterically:

"There's someone out there in the garden! I saw someone move under a tree when that lightning lit up the place. Someone all in black!"

It didn't seem possible that anyone would be out in such a tempest, and I tried to quiet her, but she kept gazing out waiting for every flash. I told her I'd go outside and look about to see if I could find anyone, or I'd call her chauffeur in the stable, but she seized my arm and sobbed:

"No, no, don't leave me! I'm afraid! Don't leave me!"

Suddenly she got up and went into her room. In a moment she returned.

"No, he's all right," she gasped. "Little Levi's sleeping right through all this tumult," and she seemed somewhat pacified and sat down again with me. But I saw that she was breathing with difficulty, and she held her hand to her heart.

And then again she was staring at me. I hope I shall never again have to see such terror as was in her eyes.

"What was that?" she asked faintly. "Did you hear anything? I thought I heard a noise."

Then, without waiting for my answer she rose and almost staggered into her room. Before I could follow her I heard a heavy sound, but whether it was distant thunder or caused by a fall, I couldn't tell. The next moment I found her lying on the floor in her room. I stooped over her and she stared at me with glassy eyes. She tried to speak. I thought she said something about the window, but I couldn't make out what it was, her voice was so faint, and I lifted her up and laid her on her bed beside the cot where the baby was sleeping. Then I ran downstairs and out through the pouring rain to the stable to call the maid.

WHEN we got back to the room, Avelia Keaf was dead. The window was open. Little Levi was gone.

I looked at my watch. It was midnight. And it was now Dec. 1st, 1945. Just one hundred and sixty years since a strange bearded man in black had put into the arms of a Dutch woman in Antwerp, a newborn babe.

And despite the present tragedy and mystery of this stormy night, the question somehow came to me: Where had that strange man, so long ago, got that baby—who now had so inexplicably disappeared?

Soldier

The author of "Galatea" and "City of Light" gives us the story of a fighting man who learned honor and honesty in dramatic fashion.

TO begin with, Maritello wasn't his real name, either, but call him that. The Maritellos might be aggrieved about all this, but Louis Maritello, so-called here, should never complain, for he used at least two names in his time that weren't his, and one of them was McCloskey. In his early days, he did no disgrace to this fine name; he carried it into many a ring, in Brooklyn, in Boston, in Phillie and New Orleans and Baltimore. "In this cornah—Kid McCloskey, of Perth Amboy—weighing a hunnert an' sixty-four pounds." So he did, and they might have added that he was only fifteen years old. Now, it's somewhat against the law to allow a boy so young to box, but it does happen. Ask some of the good ones when they started.

Was he good? Why, no; he wasn't so very good, even as they go, but he was no set-up, no bargain. A fast man could take him, a rough one might batter him down. He didn't have much of this mysterious thing called class, but he had a fair punch and a lot of heart, and he was rugged, and he feared nobody. He had no brains and few principles. Business could be done with him, but it had to be done through his manager. He took dives and he let inferior men stay, acting always under instructions, and he could see an opponent collapse under the impact of a terrific punch on the glove or the elbow without exhibiting unseemly surprise. Surprise? His face was usually the mirror of his mind: that is to say, a blank. His pulse, by the way, was slow, and he could take an icy shower without a quiver or an indrawn breath. A lot of the good performers are like that. Their hearts beat slow.

This Maritello was just this good: from the time of his debut up to the day when he got into a little trouble, as the tender phrase is, and had to do two and a bit in Mokko, which is the pet-name for the rather grisly Moyamensing Prison, he had never done a stroke of work. He was twenty-eight when that happened, and fairly well washed up as a fighter. Always on the

Maritello

by Edward L. McKenna

fringe of disorderly enterprise, as actors are, as the newspaper-boys are, he stepped in and got his feet wet at last, and the result might easily have been predicted. His conduct was deplorable and reprehensible; still, there are degrees in disgrace. He took his rap and he didn't squeal, and he might have had six months or sixty days or even a suspended sentence had he been more reasonable.

SOME would say that his jail-term reformed him. Change him it certainly did. He had never been a really important fellow, but he had always had people, men and women, who flattered him and helped him to spend his money. He was not a drunkard, and certainly not adroit enough to be a successful rake. His girls were jealous as well as mercenary; this odd combination nevertheless seems to exist.

Nobody came to see him at Moyamensing. His latest wife had divorced him; she had plenty of reason. His light-of-love shrugged her slim shoulders and stayed away; so did his old manager, and his old friends. Probably he never thought he would have to serve all of his time; he thought his principals would come to his rescue. They didn't. He was only another boy who was strong, and stupid, and brave. Why should they?

He had been rather gregarious, fond of company, willing to pay a check or part with a few dollars or buy a dress or a coat or a ring to get it.

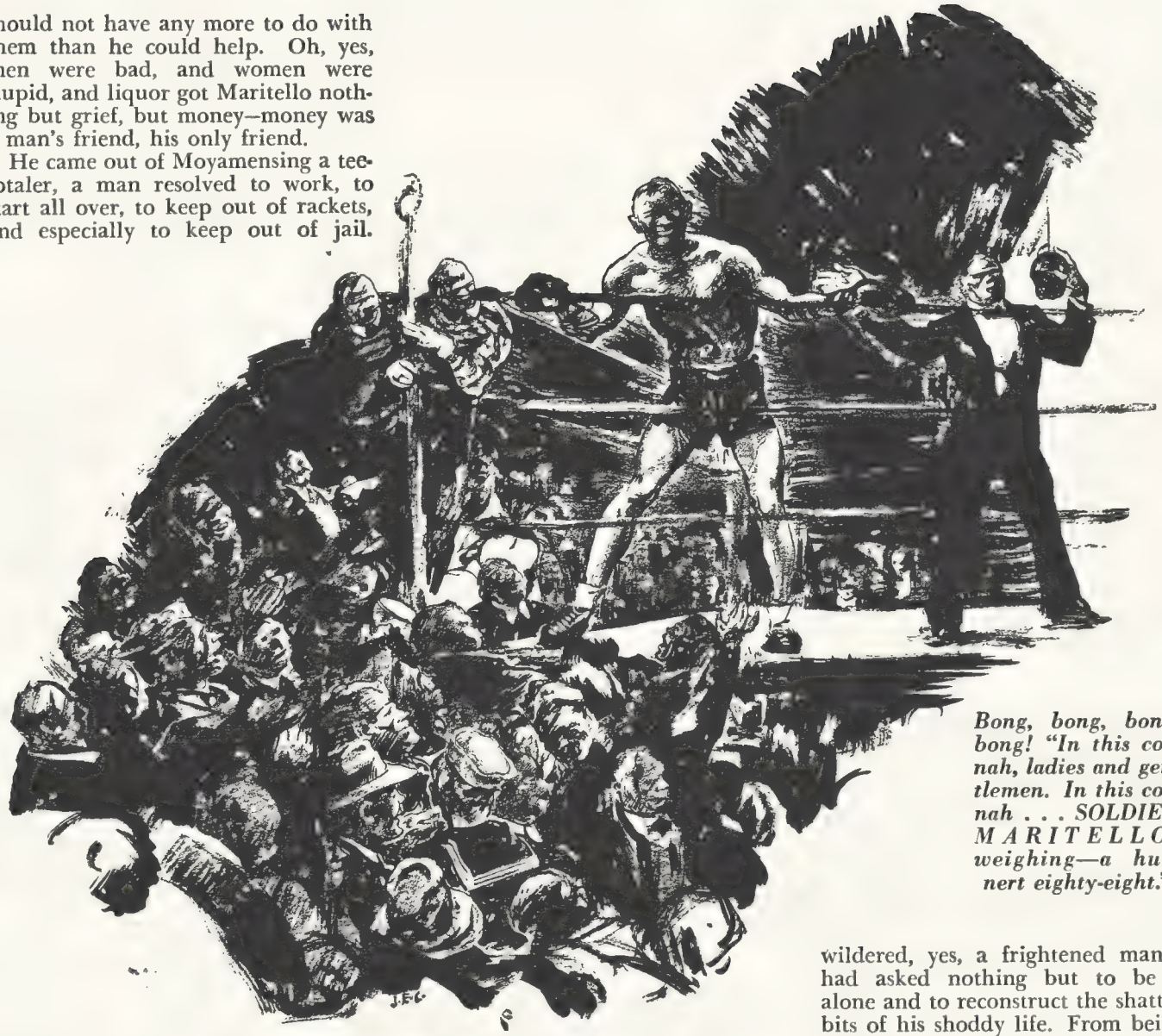
His solitude, his aloneness, bewildered him; he became a sullen, morose man, suspicious of everyone. He repelled the half-contemptuous or friendly or curious overtures of his companions in misery, and a jail is no paradise.

It is cruel to force such a man to think, but it is cruel to spank a child, too. Maybe it's necessary. At all events, he came to certain conclusions, mulling them over and over in his slow mind. In his thoughts, in his conversation, he always referred to himself as a third person. Maritello will do this, he would say, or This is not for Maritello. He would seldom say I or me.

People were no good, said Maritello. Money was good. If he had had money, he would never have been in this jam, or could have bought his way out of it. Liquor was bad. Liquor made Maritello spend money, made him too generous. Liquor got Maritello in trouble with women, too; Maritello would get a few drinks and start talking to some babe Maritello wouldn't look at when he wasn't drinking. Then the gal he really wanted and really liked would hear about it and get sore, and give Maritello the gate, maybe try to stab Maritello. Maritello would try to explain to them, try to say that it wasn't anything, only just the liquor, but it was no good. It was no use to try to explain anything to women. A man

should not have any more to do with them than he could help. Oh, yes, men were bad, and women were stupid, and liquor got Maritello nothing but grief, but money—money was a man's friend, his only friend.

He came out of Moyamensing a teetotaler, a man resolved to work, to start all over, to keep out of rackets, and especially to keep out of jail.



Bong, bong, bong, bong! "In this cornah, ladies and gentlemen. In this cornah . . . SOLDIER MARITELLO, weighing—a hunnert eighty-eight."

Incidentally, he had also learned to be a pretty fair carpenter. A reformation? In these ways, doubtless it was.

When they let him go, he started for the West. He wanted to go to the coast, for no particular reason except the impulse of the beaten man to run, to flee, to go to a place where he has never been and where he is unknown. He changed his name again; he signed himself William Martin, in the flop-houses and flea-bags fussy enough to demand a signature. He got this job and that job: Porter, dish-washer, handy-man, carpenter's helper. He didn't do anything that could be called dishonest, exactly, but it should be noticed that he played in crap games whenever he could, and he was a formidable man, unless the dice were being bounced against something. He had a natural sense of rhythm and timing, and he would practice with a pair of dice in privacy, by the hour. Well, another man will read books on chess or bridge or golf. Is it dishonest? Look at the trouble Diogenes had with this question, and maybe he was something of a charlatan, too.

Maritello never got to the coast, or at least, not on that trip. A little thing which destroyed a lot of convenient anonymity caught up with him when he was out in Kansas City. He had to register under the Selective Service Act.

With great uneasiness and bitterness of heart, he made a painful decision; he registered under his real name. The real reason why he did was because he knew his finger-prints were very much a matter of record. Like so many others who have larceny in their hearts, whatever their conduct may be, he had a deep and deadly fear of the Federal Government.

TWO months later, he was in the Army. He hated it.

By this time, he had come to look much like what no doubt he was, a small-time Ishmael, a pariah, hounded, sullen, furtive, uncommunicative, sly. A disappointed man, a bewildered, yes, a frightened man, he had asked nothing but to be left alone and to reconstruct the shattered bits of his shoddy life. From being a man who does not think at all, he had become an individualist resolved to carve out a new career. The Army changed that, distorted his muddled and chaotic plans. He wasn't the only one.

It was like being in jail, again. He didn't have any feeling of belonging, any feeling of companionship or solidarity. He sneered, openly or secretly, at the young boys in his barracks, and contempt is a hard thing to hide, and it brings quick reciprocity. They were so anxious to get letters; he got no letters. They talked of home; he had no home. They would go out on their brief leaves with such eagerness, and recount their exploits, real or imagined. Maritello would go to the movies, not because he liked them, but because it was some place to go. He avoided the U.S.O., the various avenues of innocent entertainment. That was all the bunk, to Maritello.

Of course, when he had any money, he was always open for a dice game or a poker-game. A few cold and unpleasant remarks improved some of

his mannerisms at these pastimes. It must not be thought that he was a cheat; it was merely that his gambling was a little close and hard.

Oh, no, they didn't like him. Who'd like him? He couldn't win their affection or their fear by ruffling or bullying, either, although by nature he was given to neither of these things. It wasn't necessary for him to tell them he had fought in the ring; his nose and his ear and his hands showed that. He told them little, and most of that was lies. He was devious and evasive and untruthful; he asked no questions and hated to answer them. All he wanted was what a sick dog wants; to be left alone. But a sick dog can crawl away.

They couldn't get him interested in the war. The efforts to improve his morale were fruitless. Those who tested his mental aptitude shook their heads. Of course, he had never been as far as the eighth grade, in school, and he had difficulty reading the sporting-pages. He had a fine body, and was getting into good shape, but they didn't send him overseas. They shifted him here and there, but it was always the same. They tried to make an athletic instructor out of him. It was no good. He could box, but he couldn't teach.

A man has to think of something, when he's in barracks, or he'll go crazy. Maritello thought of something.

He knew that in the course of time he would get a furlough. Twenty days, thirty days, sixty days, maybe. In that time, he was going to get a bout, maybe two bouts, and a piece of change.

This is the way he'd talk to himself: Kid McCloskey, he's all gone. There is Maritello now, not Kid McCloskey, bigger, smarter. Maybe nobody knows Kid McCloskey; if they know, all right. Get a little piece of change, big help in dice-games. It lets Maritello fade more bets, don't make him so scared to fade a big bet. Little bank-roll, for Maritello, see?

HE got his furlough and his transportation to Kansas City, which is where he never went. He stopped off in Philadelphia.

Once in Phillie, he made tracks to John Callahan, in Manayunk. John used to have his own clubs; he had been a promoter and a matchmaker for years. A real matchmaker has the soul of a poet, but a different exterior.

He didn't know Maritello at first. "Kid, you certainly filled out," he commented. "How much you weighing now?"

"One eighty-eight—and listen, Cal: Maritello wants a bout, see? Forget that Kid McCloskey. He's all gone."

"Uh, huh," said Cal. "Look, I make a couple of phone-calls."

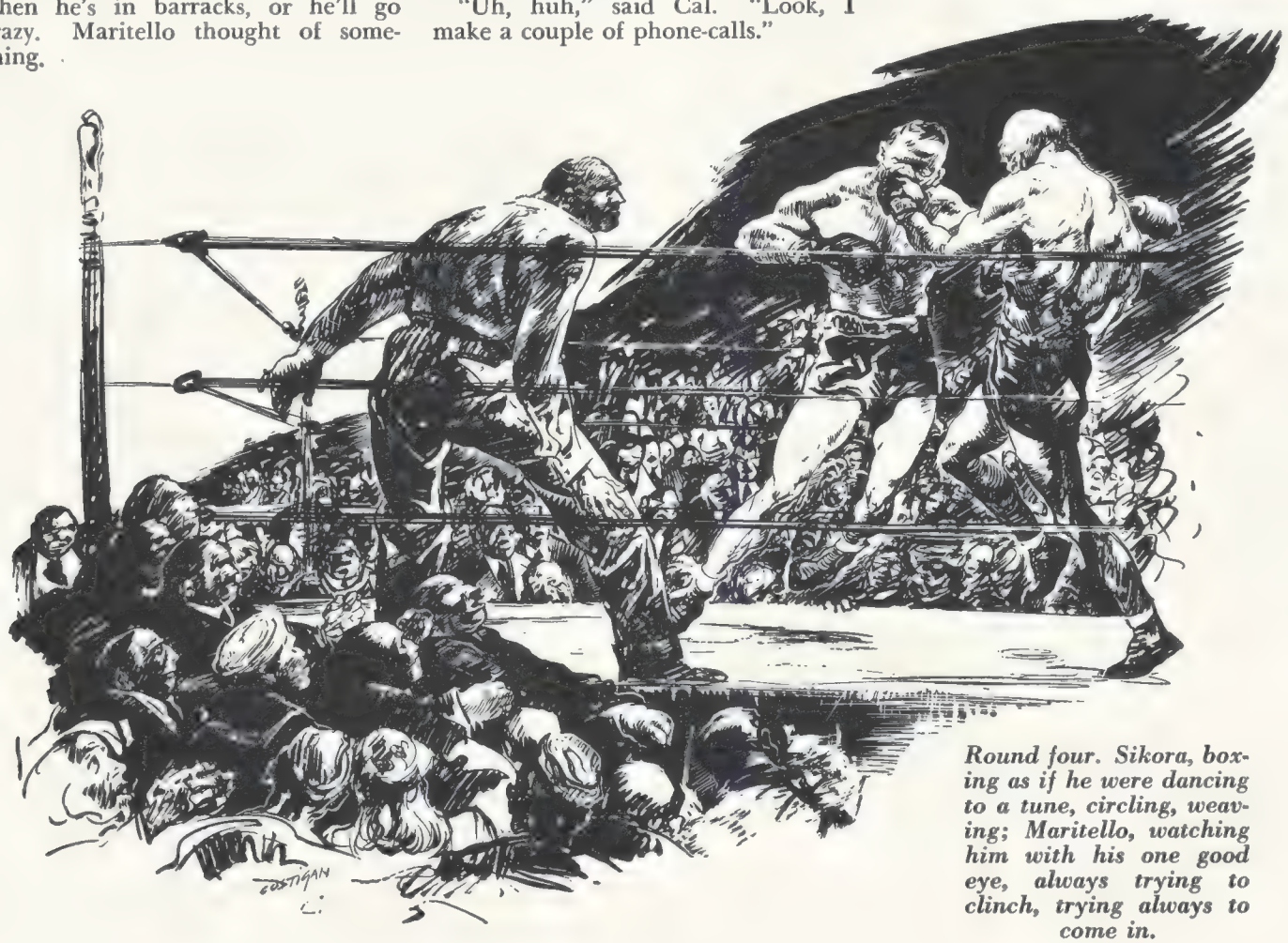
Later on, in the lockers of the gym at the Broadhurst Hotel, Maritello stripped, impassively and without bashfulness, before a highly critical audience of three men. He then boxed the first of what were to be three rounds with still a fourth man, a middle-weight, hastily summoned.

"That's enough," said Ted Morrisey. He ran the Coliseum, out in South Philadelphia. "Kid, listen! How would you like to go against Sikora, Saturday night?"

"Twelve?" said Maritello.

"Yeah. Yeah, twelve, sure. Only, you know, the Polack— Now, look Joe Berry, that was to fight him, he took sick. Yeah, must've been something he ate. He don't want to show against the Polack, that's all. I can't get nobody. Joe Summers, they grabbed him in the Army. Perelli, he got a broken collarbone. . . . I know you, we all know you. Get in there, make a fight out of it. You aint no dog. Joe Maloney always had a good word for you. They all want to see the Polack, anyway. The Polack is good, Kid. J'ever see him?"

"Sure." That was a lie. Maritello also told them he was twenty-eight. He was thirty-two. Probably they knew that, or they could have figured it out.



Round four. Sikora, boxing as if he were dancing to a tune, circling, weaving; Maritello, watching him with his one good eye, always trying to clinch, trying always to come in.

Two hours later, Maritello was installed at the Bayshore House, outside of Haddonfield, with fifty dollars cash, and a contract for five hundred dollars in consideration of his fulfilling a highly difficult engagement at the Coliseum against Joe Sikora on the following Saturday. That was a Tuesday.

Maritello had some difficulty, also, in slipping away from Haddonfield without a solicitous companion. He did it, all right, on Thursday. He sought the purlieus of the Philadelphia half-world, which oddly enough were not anywhere near Eighth and Race, or the statue of William Penn. His purpose was to collect, in advance, as much as possible of that five hundred dollars. He had uses for it.

Naturally, he didn't get the five, but he got four. He also parried the searching and embarrassing questions of the lender. This pinchbeck Maecenus of course knew Maritello. Sam—call him Sam, and heaven only knows that isn't his name—had been in every disorderly enterprise since Prohibition days in the town which facetiously is called slow.

IT wasn't the four hundred dollars that bothered Sam. That was easy; he would get five hundred, provided only that Maritello would appear for round one on Saturday, and he rather thought that Maritello would, and that it would be the wise thing for him to do. That wasn't on his mind, at all. He wanted, so badly, to know exactly what Maritello planned to do with all that money.

Maritello didn't tell him. He had withstood gentle interrogations before. Sam finally thought he had figured it out, and hastened to get rid of Maritello, so he could make his little private wagers. The fight was a fix; he was sure of that. This conviction ultimately cost Sam about fifteen thousand dollars. He didn't bet the right way.

He was right about one thing, however. There was something peculiar about that fight. In fact, there were several peculiar things.

In Philadelphia the bulldog, the first edition of tomorrow's paper, is on the street at nine o'clock or earlier the night before. On Wednesday night, the papers carried the news of the substitution of Louis Maritello, formerly of Camp Grant and Camp Devens, for Joe Berry against Sikora. By midnight Wednesday, or at the very latest by noon of Thursday, the odds on Sikora against this unknown were five to one, six to one, or name an interesting figure.

Five to one is what is known as a good price, a nice price. It is a little disheartening, however, for the underdog to know that he is held so lightly. Perhaps this was what convinced Maritello that he hadn't a chance to win. At any rate it decided his course of action.

He bet every cent he had in the world that Sikora would knock him out in the fifth round. This is to say that if Sikora stopped him in the fifth, or if he failed to answer the bell when it clanged for the sixth round, he would get a tidy sum of money.

It wasn't easy for him to place that bet. It had to be done discreetly, and with caution, and the use of an assistant. Also, it cost Maritello one hundred dollars, besides various threats of sanguinary vengeance if the secret were not kept with the utmost inviolateness. Maritello wasn't fooling at all. The man who made the bet for him knew he wasn't. This low person also bet Maritello's hundred, the same way. Know what they stood to get? Eight to one. Eight hundred dollars for a hundred. Maritello, with all his worldly goods riding on his prowess, the four hundred, the balance of the fifty they advanced to him, and another hundred and thirty-five he happened to have, figured to make over four thousand dollars. All he had to do was last four, and quit in the fifth. He could count all right, too. Anything up to ten.

On that Saturday night Maritello started from his dressing-room for the ring. The Coliseum wasn't sold out, but it was fairly crowded. The substitution hadn't helped box-office sales. Realizing this, Ted Morrissey, out of the goodness of his heart, had sent a lot of seats, extras seats, to the Navy Yard, to Camp Dix, to the U.S.O., to the Y and to the Knights of Columbus for distribution to Service men.

WHEN Maritello started down the ramp, there was a roar of welcome. He hesitated—looked quickly, anxiously about him. "Maritello! "Maritello!" they were shouting. He had fought a lot of times; he had fought a hundred fights, yes; but this was the first time he had ever heard his name, his real name flung at the roof-tops, beating against the sky. They were on their feet to greet him; they went crowding the aisles to touch him, to slap his back.

"Atta boy, Soldier!" they were yelling. "What do you say, Soldier? Good luck, Soldier! Send him back to the mines. Send him back to Wilkes-Barre. Give him something for his broken eardrum, Soldier."

And so Maritello stalked down the aisle to the obbligato of his own name: "Maritello! *Maritello!*" When he climbed into the ring, they were still shouting, and Maritello did something that Kid McCloskey had never done; he dropped his bathrobe, and gave it a kick, and went prancing and capering about the ring, going to every side, and shaking his taped hands above his head.

When Sikora came in, Sikora, a decent enough man too, as they go, what did he get? "Boo-oo! Boo-oo!" he got, and catcalls, and whistles, and predictions about what Oma was going to do to him, in the Garden. Of course, he also got a nice hand, too, because Sikora was one of the best there is.

Bong, bong, bong, bong! "In this cornah, ladies and gentlemen. In this cornah . . . the man who—" "Boo-oo. Back to the mines." "To fight Lee Oma. . . . Boo-oo!" "The Wilkes-Barre Polish boy, the hard-coal miner—*Joe Sikora.* . . . Weighing a hunnert-ninety-six pounds." "Over heah—over heah. The heavyweight champeen of Camp Grant—*and* of Camp Devens. Showing for the first time, in a Philadelphia ring—*Soldier Maritello,* of Kansas City. . . . Weighing—weighing—a hunnert eighty-eight and a hahf!" ("Aagh. Givin' him ten pounds. Stoo much. Stoo much!")

Soldier Maritello, grabbing the ropes, squatting and rising, shuffling his feet in the resin. Soldier Maritello, extending his gloved hands, palms down, to the grinning, good-natured-looking Sikora, who touched them with his own. Instructions, to which neither listened. Then the bell.

AMIABLE Joe Sikora, suddenly as fast as Phryne, and bad as that tiglion up at the Zoo, the tiglion that's half lion, half tiger. Sikora, called half-affectionately "the Polack," out to wind this one up in a hurry, for the sake of the New York papers, and also for the sake of Oma, Nova, Baksi, a colored boy somewhere in England and a white boy somewhere in France. Sikora, pressing, suddenly jarred back on his heels, and wrestled roughly in a clinch. What is this, said Sikora to himself. This is no Johnny-come-lately. This is no set-up. This is a ringer.

"I have seen this guy somewhere," said Johnny Martin, of the *Record.* "I don't know who this fellow is—fights like Whitey Fitzgerald," said Eddie Jones, of the *Inquirer.* "I know him—I make him," said Lanse McCurley, of the *Daily News.* "That's Kid McCloskey, used to fight at the Cambria, and the Broadway." "No, Lanse," they said. "Kid McCloskey must be dead. No, he's in stir; McDevitt threw the book at him for a heist-job. No, Lanse," they said.

Thus, Maritello to Maritello: "This Polack is good, all right, but not too good for Maritello. Maritello will watch him right; Maritello will keep in close."

Illustrated by
John Costigan, N.A.

He had fought a hundred fights, yes; but this was the first time he had ever heard his name, his real name, flung at the roof-tops, beating against the sky.

End of round one: Even, or Sikora by a shade.

End of round two: Sikora, by a mile.

Middle of round three. Keep in close, Maritello. Keep in close. Don't box him; he knows too much for Maritello. Watch that right. Now come in. . . .

Three. . . . four . . . . five . . . . six. . . . seven—

Maritello! Maritello! Get up! It's that piece of change, Maritello's little piece of change. It's got to be done. Up, get into him, hang on, don't let go. Let the ref slap Maritello's back off, Maritello never let go. Make him break it. That's it, that's got it. So that's your right, Polack, huh? It aint much.

From all over the house: "Stay with him, Soldier! Stay with him, Soldier! In the kitchen, Soldier! Downstairs, Soldier! He don't like it. He don't like it."

Bong. End of round three.

"The Soldier is all right," said Johnny Martin. "This round goes," said Eddie Jones. "Maybe not this round," said Lanse McCurley. "That's Kid McCloskey. Anybody want to bet?"

Maritello to himself in his corner: "He is too good. He is too good, and Maritello is too old. But Maritello is going to last this round. Then it will be the fifth. Then Maritello will

go. Then he can go to sleep, and wake up, and have four thousand dollars. Rub Maritello's legs. Rub his legs good, for Maritello. Give smelling-salts. Don't care if the Polack sees. Maritello's going to last this round."

Round four: Sikora, boxing as if he were dancing to a tune, circling, weaving; Maritello, watching him with his one good eye, always trying to clinch, trying always to come in. Maritello, knocked down twice, but on his feet at the bell. Maritello, wobbling, shaking, making a start to the wrong corner.

All over the arena men in uniform, men in civilian clothes, shouting, roaring approval for him. "Atta boy, Soldier! Good boy, Soldier! Stay with him, Soldier!"

"I don't know what holds that guy up," said Johnny Martin.

"They ought to stop the fight; it's a murder," said Eddie Jones.

"I don't know for sure whether that's really Kid McCloskey," said Lanse McCurley.

"Look," said Eddie Jones. "There goes Doc Terry to look at him. He's going to stop it."

"Terry will stop it, if he thinks it ought to be stopped," said Lanse McCurley.

"No, Doc! Doc, no, no! Don't stop this fight. Please don't stop it. Maritello, Maritello got to go another round. No, Doc! If Maritello quit, he is no soldier, never any more! They never call him Soldier Maritello."

"O.K.," said Dr. Terry. "You going to take it standing up, huh?—Work on him, you. He says he's not through; well, O.K. Good luck, Soldier!"

SIKORA knocked out Soldier Maritello in the eighth round. At the end of the fifth, which he fought cautiously and well, Maritello lifted his soggy hands over his head and shook them, and did a clumsy dance-step, and the crowd laughed and yelled. They didn't know he had just thrown away all the money he had in the world. Perhaps he was congratulating himself.

When it ended, they gave him a great hand, and brought the mike over to him. He seized it, and said: "This Maritello. This for Maritello's buddies, in Camp Grant, Company M. Maritello fought his best. Maritello did not quit. He was knock' out by Joe Sikora, a good man."

Somebody must have reversed the judgment about Maritello's aptitude for combat-duty. When the war ended, he was somewhere in the Islands. So far as is known, he's still out there. It wouldn't matter, anyhow. He doesn't read anything.

The GREAT

"BUT I still don't get it," I said. "What is a gizmo—what's the word mean?"

The Professor turned his thick lenses my way and twiddle-fingered his goatee. *"Gizmo,"* he piped, "is a generic term covering much the same field as *gadget, gimmick, widgit, thing-a-ma-bob, contraption* and so on. It denotes an object of a mechanical nature having a function which, for the moment, eludes us. It therefore seemed appropriate to call this a gizmo."

"But if you've spent eighteen years inventing it, you ought to know what it's for."

"Umm. Not necessarily." The Professor smoothed his hand over the gizmo the way you will rub a dog's head. "A man can get lost in his work," he said quietly.

The gizmo looked something like a medium-sized adding-machine, except that there were hundreds of tiny keys, several banks of buttons, and here and there a set of dials or a group of colored lights. It had sounds too, as I found out later. I'd happened to sit next to the Professor at Barney's Bar earlier in the evening, and we'd got to talking. He told me about inventing the gizmo, and being a promotor, I became interested. I needed a promotion.

"About six years after I began working on the principle," he continued in his mild little voice, "I had my accident. Since then the memory of what I did in the beginning has never been clear to me, and so there are features of the gizmo that remain obscure. After all, there are forty-two thousand moving parts in this machine."

"Explain it again," I asked.

He cleared his throat gently. "Consider the race-track totalizer. It automatically and infallibly does the work of a hundred accountants. It calculates the ever-shifting public opinion

GIZMO

The story of a miraculous mechanism that solves personal problems—and will drive Pat Pending mad with jealousy.

by Gilbert Wright

on each horse, and determines the final betting odds; it deducts for overhead, breakage, political expense; it makes allowances for the condition of the track due to relative humidity, and—"

"I understand the totalizer," I interrupted. "I mean, I know there is such a thing. But according to what you told me, the gizmo does not use numbers."

"Primarily, no. The function of the gizmo is to solve situations. I have discovered through many years of study that there are only eight thousand and three situations that can befall a human being. I broke these down into one hundred and nine general classes—represented by this upper bank of keys. Now this block of buttons governs the relationship of all possible variations that—"

"Okay," I said. "Okay. I believe in the gizmo. Now, let's see it work."

"Delighted!" smiled the Professor. "Suppose I take you?"

"Maybe you will, at that," I said.

The Professor studied me. He reminded me of a costume-jewelry bug I had once bought Opal. He began murmuring to himself, poking a button or lever at each word: "Good-looking . . . . athletic . . . . about twenty-six . . . . fair education . . . . intelligent . . . . six foot three . . . . one hundred and eighty . . . . self-confident . . . . gullible—"

The gizmo began tapping a bell, and a red pin-point of light came on. The Professor frowned, looked over his set-up, then smiled and nodded. "You see," he said happily, "I introduced a contradiction by putting down both *'intelligent'* and *'gullible'*—naturally, the gizmo caught it. We'll strike out *'intelligent.'*" He did so, and the red light went off.

"Now then—" He turned to me. "What is your problem? Just talk along, and I will set up the various factors as you come to them."

"Well," I said, "I'm about broke."

"How much money have you?"

"Eight dollars and eleven cents," I replied without looking.

THE PROFESSOR poked a button and set a dial. "Proceed."

"Okay. When I got out of the service, I came here to L.A. to look up Opal and find a job, so's we could be married and get a farm. Before the war we both lived in Lake City, Iowa, and I did pretty well promoting hog-calling contests around the State."

"You—call hogs?"

"Oh, no," I replied. "I haven't any talent. I just used to locate good callers, and promote contests at fairs. I've also dabbled in corn-husking bees. Opal was a farmer's daughter."

"Proceed."

"Well, I came out here and found Opal all right. But she's making a hundred and eighty dollars a week picking up dropped rivets in a war plant, and I'm pretty much out of her social sphere. I can't seem to get a job promoting anything. I can't even promote a room, though a friend lets me sleep in his coupé at the parking lot."

The Professor held up his hand, and I paused while he gave the gizmo this information. By now several colored lights were blinking, and a whirring sound was gnawing at something. He nodded at me.

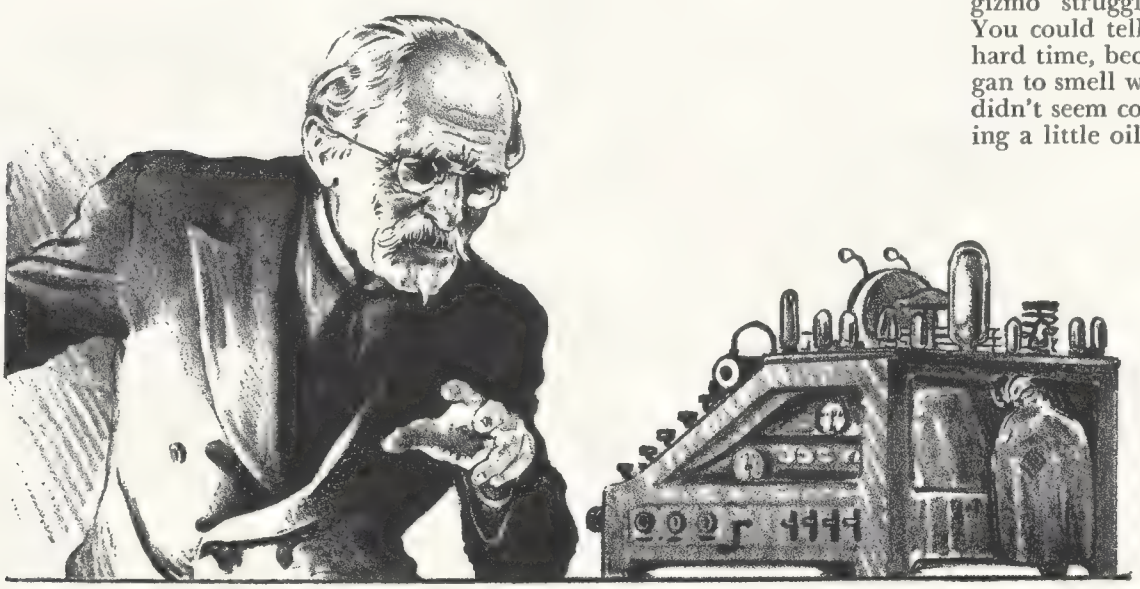
"Opal is better looking than ever. She's the wholesome farm type, and makes all the girls I've seen in California look washed-out and spindly. She seems just as fond of me as ever but— Oh, I don't know. She has a swanky apartment, and there's a studio publicity man who's hanging around trying to talk her into going into the movies. She's liable to do it too, if she can better herself financially."

"I think I have the essentials now," said the Professor. "One thing more—your Social Security number?"

I gave it to him, and he set a dial. Then he looked everything over, snapped his goatee a couple of times, and pulled down a lever. There was a clash of gears, and the gizmo really came to life. Buttons popped up and down; levers clicked back and forth; lights blinked and changed colors, and a new sound started that went *poop-poop-poop, peep-peep-peep, poop-poop-poop.*

"It will take about twenty minutes," said the Professor, and reaching under the desk, brought out a bottle and some paper cups.

I didn't say much during the wait, just sipped my drink and watched the gizmo struggle with my problems. You could tell it was having a pretty hard time, because after a while it began to smell warm. But the Professor didn't seem concerned, beyond squirting a little oil in a hole. "It worked



Illustrated by Charles Chickering

day and night for a week on the World Peace Problem," he said proudly. "This gizmo has stamina."

"Gosh! What did it say about peace?" I asked.

The Professor shrugged, "It just typed out: 'TO BE CONTINUED.'"

Suddenly the gizmo went dark and silent. Then it grunted, and a slip of paper flicked out of a slot. On it were two words: "PROMOTE CALLING."

I was pretty disgusted, and after another drink, I thanked the Professor and went to the parking lot. But as usual, I had a hard time sleeping. Only, this time I kept thinking of the gizmo and all the hard work it had put in on me. It just didn't seem possible that it would advise me to leave Opal and go back to Iowa and try to promote a hog-calling contest. Then I got to thinking that it hadn't advised any such thing. No mention of Iowa. It might mean that I ought to promote a contest right here in Hollywood. Maybe I could get some big star with a farm to back me.

EARLY next morning I unfolded my legs, stepped on the starter and drove my bedroom to San Fernando Valley. I finally found a field with some hogs in it, hunted up the farmer, and explained my idea. He looked at me for a while.

"Listen, son," he said. "In this day and age we don't call no hogs. Not never. Come feeding-time, we carry the food out to *them!* You think I want my hogs running off two-three hundred red points every evening? Why, I got a ball and chain on all of 'em now."

I returned to town pretty downhearted. Gizmo or no gizmo, I had to get something started in my direction soon. I'd learned a lot in the Army, but when you came right down to it, I hadn't learned much I could practice in civilian life—unless somebody tried to pull a gun on me. Well, I thought I would drop in on the Professor.

He was seated at the desk, looking at the gizmo—frowning at it, in fact. But he smiled when he saw me and asked how I was coming on. I told him about the hogs.

"Tut!" he said. "Too bad. Suppose we set the fact up and see what comes of it. The lack of hogs to call quite naturally places you in a new situation."

He punched buttons and set dials. The gizmo began clicking in a quiet sort of way, not extending itself, but busy.

"It don't seem to be straining over me the way it did yesterday," I said.

The Professor made a puzzled sound and shook his head. "Something appears to have come over it. If this were not a mere machine, one might almost fancy that it had undergone a change of attitude. If you sense what I mean."

I laughed. "That's a silly idea."

The Professor chuckled mildly, "Yes indeed, very silly."

The gizmo grunted and out came the paper. It read: "CALLING. PROMOTE CALLING."

"Practically the same as yesterday," sighed the Professor. He thought a moment, then shook his head. "I don't understand. We have just introduced a new situation regarding the lack of hogs—"

He was interrupted by another grunt from the gizmo. "Good heavens!" exclaimed the Professor. "An afterthought!"

I pulled out the paper: "HOGS NEVER MENTIONED." "By gosh, that's true," I said. "Here I've been spraining my brain over promoting a hog-calling contest, and the gizmo never said anything about hogs. It wants me to promote a calling contest. Okay, there's a lot of things you can call. Let's see—well, dogs. Get a lot of dogs from the pound, and have a contest to see who can whistle in the most. No, not quite it. Besides, they'd all fight."

THE PROFESSOR wasn't listening. He was staring at the gizmo with a faraway look in his eyes, scissoring his goatee between two fingers.

I touched his shoulder, "Hey, Prof," I said. "The gizmo knew all along that—"

He lifted his lenses. With one hand he was drumming nervously on the desk.

"Leave me alone for a time," he said quietly. . . .

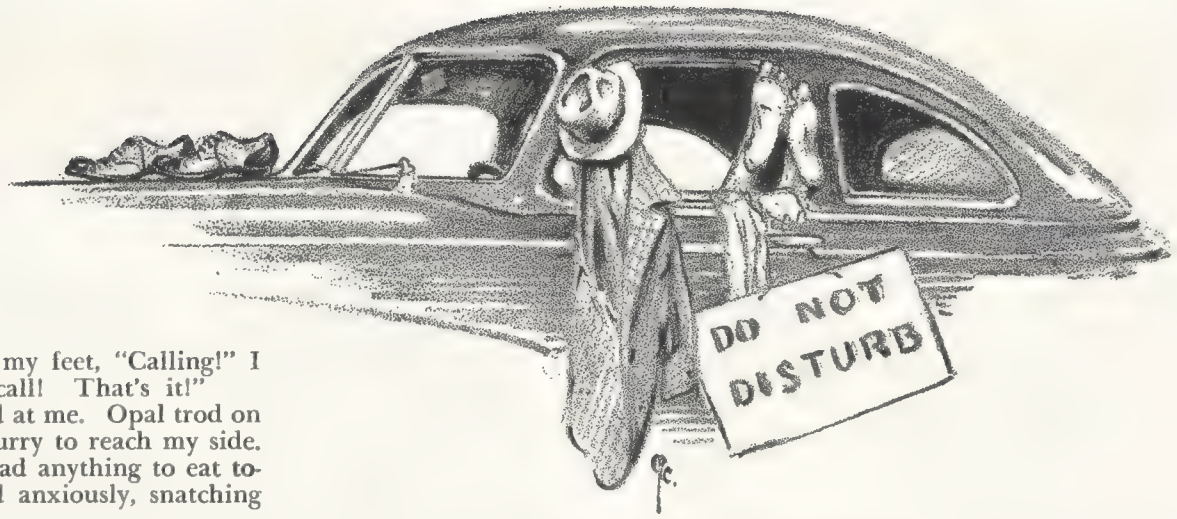
Well, I hadn't solved my problem by evening, and it had cost me three twenty to get through the day. I dropped in to see Opal.

The usual flashy bunch was there, sitting around drinking and impressing each other. This Teddy Moon, the publicity man, was shining up to Opal, and she was taking it all in, big-eyed. He had her believing that, with his help, she was going to be the next great picture sensation. "Statuesque. Eyes of arctic ice softened by the spring warmth of the tundra and stabbed by the clean-swept beauty of a gull's wing." Stuff like that. And he was going to whip up a starring vehicle for her called, "The Viking's Bride," and so on.

I thought Opal was beautiful too, but she wasn't any gull's wing. In middle age she would be comfortably fat, like a woman ought so as to be good-natured and healthy. I thought how wonderful she would look sitting on a milking stool, lugging a bushel basket of prime corn to the stock, hanging out the wash, digging in the radish bed, chopping kindling, making biscuits or basting a roast. That's the way I saw Opal. On a fine Iowa farm near a brook or a pond where I could get in a little fishing.

While I was dreaming over these things, an idea was tapping away in the back of mind. I listened to it and discovered it had something to do with the radio which was going full blast. Some woman was singing or, rather she was: *"Calling you-who-a-whoooo—"*

"Singers—get it? We'll hire the Coliseum for the contest!"



I jumped to my feet, "Calling!" I yelled. "Love-call! That's it!"

People looked at me. Opal trod on Moon in her hurry to reach my side. "Haven't you had anything to eat today?" she asked anxiously, snatching my glass.

I looked at Moon. "You and I have some business to talk over," I said. "Let's go into the kitchen."

"Now," I said, as I closed the door, "I'll begin by saying that I don't like you."

"Mutual," said Moon.

"But you're head-of-publicity in a big studio, and I'll need you sooner or later. I'll need all the publicity heads of all the studios, name bands, radio—"

"Look," he said. "Whatever it is, I'm not interested." He started for the door.

I hooked three or four fingers between the back of his neck and his shirt-collar. "Look: every studio has got two or three winsome lads they are grooming to be the heart-throb of the younger generation. Singers, get it? We'll hire the Coliseum for this contest. Around the edge of the field we'll have enclosed booths, each with a microphone and loud-speaker. Nobody will know who is in these booths or what studio is interested in him. See? And in the center of the field we'll have a thousand high-school girls.

"Okay. At the crack of a pistol, all these concealed hopefuls will begin to sing. The girls will listen; they will begin to mill around. Little groups will break away from the bunch and start for a booth, change their minds, circle around, start for another booth. There will be action, drama, suspense—and finally the whole bunch will stampede to the booth with the greatest drawing power. That guy, whoever he is, will be proven the—"

MOON suddenly sagged to the floor. Right off I saw he was not just overcome by the magnitude of my idea. So I took my fingers out of his collar and pretty soon he was breathing again. "Well, what do you think?" I asked.

"You're stark mad," he swallowed. "Suppose you do prove one guy's drawing power and make a new star. What happens to the other boys?"

"They could go into some useful line of work," I replied. "And their studios would get more young hopefuls, and then we could have a return match. Maybe take the contest right into some big place like Des Moines."

Moon couldn't see it. He gave me two or three hundred reasons why it wouldn't possibly work, and then left to see his doctor. Opal was pretty cool toward me. So I excused myself and went to the parking lot.

LATE next afternoon I was standing on Hollywood Boulevard at Highland. Earlier I had stood on the Boulevard at Vine and at all the corners in between. I hadn't been to see the Professor. For my dough his gizmo hadn't a fact in forty-two thousand moving parts—just a mechanical rumor-monger.

Hollywood High had let out, and I was surrounded by a large covey of girls waiting for a car. They were chattering and squeaking and cooing, and I was amazed to see that they all had newspapers, and that all the papers were open, but not to the comics.

This struck me as odd, so I listened in and peeked over a few shoulders at the evening editions. Then I hurried to the studio that employed Mr. T. Moon.

I was lucky. He had just left the gate and was coming toward me. I took up a position in the center of the sidewalk alongside a concrete wall and waited.

"Hah," he said when he recognized me. He paused, then came on rather doubtfully.

"I see by the papers that you came around to liking my idea after all," I said.

He looked me right in the eye. "What idea?"

"Got the Coliseum hired already, they tell me."

"Oh," he said. "That. If you're referring to the singing contest—I've had it on the fire for a long time."

"As of last night in Opal's kitchen."

He looked around. There were no witnesses. "Well, so what? You can't patent an idea like that. Any smart promoter could have thought of it."

"I weigh a hundred and eighty-six," I said. "And the Army taught me how to protect my interests. I may not be able to patent my idea. But Mr. Moon, I can sure patent you, here and now. And if anything further is needed, I will patent you whenever I see you, and I will manage to see quite a lot of you."

"You're making threats," he said.

"Not at all," I replied, taking off my wrist-watch and sliding it into my pocket. "No, I'm just reading you the bill-of-fare. Will you have it *à la* Judo, or just plain American style?"

"Now, wait a minute—"

I waited.

He thought. "Well, look: Why not come in as my technical adviser? I understand you've had experience promoting contests."

"I've got a better idea," I said. "You can be my leg man. You have some useful studio contacts."

"I'll make you my assistant."

I moved him gently toward the concrete wall. "Are you my leg man?" I asked. Gently I took his right thumb in my right hand, placed my left foot on his right knee and put my left hand on his right shoulder. I firmed him slightly.

"Okay," he said quickly. "I'm your man. What do we do first?"

"FIRST," I decided, "we will make the headquarters of the contest at my hotel."

"Good idea. That's much better than using any one studio. Keep everything impartial from the start. Where are you staying?"

"That will be your first assignment," I said. "It doesn't matter to me so long as the bed is six foot five."

"I see. I'll have the studio get you a reservation. And here—" He handed me fifty dollars. "Salary advance," he explained.

"You're not a bad guy," I said. "As long as you know who's boss."

"That's life," he said. "If it's too big to lick, be nice to it. Gee, that's a honey of an idea of yours about the contest, Chief! Let's drop in some place and talk it over."

In one wild and hectic week we were ready. And when the great day came, even the California weather was unusually good. The Coliseum was jammed by opening time. As a matter of fact, two hours before the start there were enough customers to make me a substantial down payment on the sort of farm I had in mind.

The poor guy got tripped and got tangled up and was calling for help in Swedish.

We had a dozen entries. Each had come up a cloth-covered tunnel and was in his booth. Even I didn't know who was where, and the beauty of it all was that those who lost could sneak out without being seen and claim they'd never competed. But the boy that won—a star at the conclusion of a song!

The twelve booths were arranged at equal intervals clear around the field. And exactly in the center was a beautiful red, white and blue corral so constructed that at the touch of a button the whole thing was jerked fifty feet in the air. We had fifteen hundred addicts in the corral—all dressed alike in Sloppy Joe sweaters, plaid skirts, short socks and saddle shoes. Chaperons with first aid kits and stretcher bearers stood about at strategic points. Of course, there were several camera platforms, a company of mounted police, twelve bands and all that sort of thing.

We had also set up a short three ring circus with riding, animal acts, thirty clowns, and so on, to entertain the older people and give us something we could top.

Everybody knew when the preliminaries were over and there was not a sound as our master of ceremonies rode out on his white horse and asked for silence. He explained the rules of the contest and pointed out the various booths. Then he whipped out a .45 and blasted the atmosphere. The corral was wafted aloft and there stood the herd of juveniles. They widened out a little, then waited.

Another pistol-shot. From eleven booths came the voices of the singers. I tore toward the one booth that was silent, figuring the microphone had gone dead, and had just reached it when the late starter found his voice and began. And believe me he had something.

Maybe half a minute passed without anything definite happening. Then you could see that the island of girls was slowly changing from round to pear-shaped. And the stem of the pear was pointed toward the booth beside me. I couldn't make out the words of this guy's song, maybe because I was so close and directly behind the loud speaker. But his tone was enough. It had all and more than I ever heard in this kind of singing—pleading, passion, pathos. And the way he would sort of pause, break his voice, and then go on again just brought tears to your eyes.

There was a sudden roar from the crowd as the girls broke. There wasn't any jockeying around or pointing eeny-meeney-miney-mo. Every single girl leveled out to beat the rest to this guy's booth. Then his microphone went dead.

I ducked under the curtain and ran to the booth. It was locked, but I had a key.

WELL, I was surprised. The singer was a Swedish electrician who'd come to adjust the microphone. He'd been in a hurry and had got his finger caught in the hinge that regulates the tilt. Then he'd tripped and got tangled up in the wire, and the poor guy had just been lying there on the floor calling for help in Swedish.

I did what I could for him, and was wondering what on earth I was going to do next, when two men came into the booth. One was Teddy Moon and

"Not on your life. . . . That's the man who gave the entertainment: he's the star."

the other a nice-looking young guy I recognized as a contestant. We could hear the girls chanting: "Come out, come out, whoever you are!"

"This contestant couldn't get in," said Moon. "Fix up the place and let him sing."

"Not on your life!" I pointed to the electrician. "That's the man who gave the entertainment; he's the star."

"Do you think he can make a career for himself?" asked Moon.

I looked at the electrician. He was kind of old and tired-looking. "Can you sing?" I asked.

He shook his head.

"Okay," I said to Moon. "We'll have to have it your way." I turned to the young guy. "Bud, you're going to be a star. First money you get goes into an annuity for this electrician. Right?"

"Right," grinned the kid.

The girls outside were beginning to take down the Coliseum.

"I'd better sing 'em an encore," said the kid. He looked anxiously at the electrician. "I'd appreciate it if you'd give me the pitch. I'm sure I can imitate you if I just get a start."

I thought over the situation like lightning. Time was of the essence and besides the old guy would get a nice income for life so I choked down my scruples and stamped on his foot.

The kid listened a moment, smiled and nodded for us to leave. We scurried out, carrying the electrician between us. Then the sides of the booth came down and the girls screamed with delight at this good looking kid. He sang all afternoon right on pitch, stretcher-bearers came and went—a wonderful performance.

THAT evening I took Opal to see the Professor. He was seated at his desk poking away at the gizmo's buttons, throwing levers and clashing gears. It seemed to me he was being a little rough.

Thousands of paper slips already littered the floor and the gizmo smelled very warm. Another slip popped out and I read it over the Professor's shoulder: "YOU ARE A LIAR." The Professor banged out another setup and jerked the lever. "OH YEAH?" said the gizmo; then it grunted and another paper came out saying "NUTS TO YOU GRANDPA."

I touched him on the shoulder: "Professor, I'd like you to meet my wife-to-be. We owe everything to you and the gizmo."

"Ah," he said, swinging his lenses. "Ah yes." He turned back to the gizmo. "I am beginning to discover," he piped, "some of the factors I incorporated into this machine before I had my accident." He paused, shook his head, and got up. "I'm not sure that I like it." He thought a moment. "As a matter of fact," he said sharply, "I am positive that I do *not* like it!" He snatched a hammer and began battering the gizmo.

I tried to stop him, but after the first blow it was too late. There were forty-two thousand moving parts in that machine.

When he had finished, the Professor turned to us with a gentle smile. "So you are to be married? Charming. Charming." He looked about happily, located two chairs and dragged them beside his. "Well, well," he said, rubbing his hands together, "this certainly appears to be an occasion for a little celebration." Reaching under the desk, he brought out a bottle and some paper cups.

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Behind *the* Enemy

THE camouflaged C-47 circled above Nazi-occupied Greece and slowly started its run. Below in the night small pinpoints of light twinkled in a special pattern. The top-secret recognition signal was blinked from the plane. Seconds later, the correct response flashed back from below.

"This is it, men!" Captain Andy Rogers, thirty-year-old American paratrooper and former University of Arizona football and track champion, poised himself in the wind-lashed opening. Behind him, with their static lines carefully attached to the overhead cable, were eleven other American paratroopers of the Office of Strategic Services, jumping into Greece for what was probably the biggest and most daring behind-the-lines demolition job of the war.

As he admitted later, Rogers was "scared as hell myself, but couldn't show it to my men."

"Good luck, Skipper!"

"Thumbs up, men! I'll see you on the ground!"

A split second of waiting. . . . The jump-signal light on the wall gleamed a warning red. Suddenly it flashed green—*"Go!"* And as the dispatcher's fist struck his rump, Rogers hurtled through the door and down into the night.

The wind rushed against him; the pinpoints of light danced crazily; and then, with a convulsive jerk, the parachute opened and Rogers found himself dropping rapidly through a vacuum of blackness. Only seconds later he hit; his body fell heavily forward, and he sprawled full-length in the soft fresh wonderful dirt.

For a moment he lay there, stunned by the realization that they had jumped too low. He had told the pilot to drop them at seven hundred feet; it must have been close to four hundred. Another one hundred feet less, and his chute would never have opened. . . . Would the rest of his section be as lucky?

The silence was shattered suddenly by the sound of running feet. There was someone coming toward him! In a flash he was out of his harness, his pistol clenched in his hand. Looming up before him was a great bearded figure; then he felt himself enveloped by huge arms.

"Americani! Americani!" came an excited voice between garlic-scented kisses. All around, glistening white chutes were hitting the ground and collapsing. They had done it! The first American troops had parachuted safely into Greece. "Staircase Mission" was on its way. It was May 14, 1944.

The incredible task before them was to blow up the main coastal road and railroad which supplied all the German garrisons guarding the Adriatic coast of Greece. These parallel arteries were of vital importance to the Hun, because he had no other land-route either to supply his garrisons or withdraw them, should events in another theater require it. The only alternative means was by small craft; and the RAF, working closely with the Royal Navy, was giving enemy shipping such a thorough going-over that this method had proved so costly as to be almost prohibitive. Because of its critical importance, the Germans patrolled their vital road and railway twenty-four hours a day and numerous garrisons were located in the mountain towns along its entire length.

This first of a remarkable fact series dealing with the exploits of the OSS men describes the daring demolition job done in Greece by twelve paratroopers under Captain Andy Rogers.

by

LT. COM. RICHARD M. KELLY

The secondary objective of the OSS mission was to organize, arm and train Greek guerrilla forces and lead them in harassing attacks against the invader.

Although this was the first combat jump for Rogers and his eleven volunteers, it was their fourth attempt at a behind-the-lines invasion of Greece. The initial effort, conducted from an Italian destroyer sailing from Taranto in Italy, had been unsuccessful when the signal lights from the shore had warned that the Germans were patrolling the beach. On the second try, the men had been ready to jump when they discovered that the ground-flashes were from German rifles which had put several holes in the plane.

The third venture had failed when there had been no sign of the secret welcoming signals on the ground.

ON this fourth try the group had been dropped to a field about two hundred miles from their target, since the landing-grounds farther up in the mountains were not safe for personnel.

Another reason for the choice was to deceive the enemy as to their real objective when he detected their presence—a development Rogers knew would surely occur within a few hours after their landing.

There was no time to lose. Quickly the Americans filed after the excited Greek to the center of the dropping-ground, where the officer in charge of the reception committee was waiting for them. At sight of him, Rogers stared in amazement—six feet four of striking Scotsman, with a tartan tam, a long red mustache and a bedraggled British Army raincoat. So this was Major "Mac"! His orders were brisk and efficient; the forty containers of supplies were assembled, packed onto fifteen mules and sent off into the night to the camp; Rogers was settled by a small fire opposite the Major having his first drink of ozo, the native whisky, to celebrate their safe arrival, and getting his first quick briefing on the situation.

Lines

"Y'know," the Major burred casually, "we've got some Krauts three miles up the road!"

"Three miles!" choked Rogers incredulously. "My God, we'd better start getting the hell out of here!" Their plane had circled six times over the field in order to drop the men and supplies, which meant that they had flown directly over the German garrison. The nightly German patrols, on the prowl for the Greek guerrillas, had probably even now flashed word to the garrison; a patrol in force could be expected in minutes.

Major Mac's guffaw broke into his thoughts. "I know what you're thinking, old boy," he said, "but what do you think I've got a grapevine for? Ten to one we'll have no trouble with those so-and-so's tonight—they're in the middle of a drunken brawl. And," he added, his eyes twinkling under his bushy eyebrows, "with a damn' sight better stuff than this ozo!"

He put his cup down, and his face suddenly tightened. "They always throw a party after they shoot up a town, torture the old men and women and burn down their houses. They've been particularly dirty with their reprisals around here because they know we've got something big doing. These brawls must be to make the men forget the bloody business—but we aren't forgetting, nor are the Greeks!"

Rogers, watching him as he spoke, realized the grim terror that lay over the land. The Major was standing now. "You'd better get moving," he said. "I'll get your guides."

QUICKLY the Americans gathered. At Rogers' order they cocked their guns for instant firing against an ambush. The field about them was now clear. Fires had been buried, the ground completely cleared, so when the first fuzzy-brained German patrol should arrive at daybreak they would find nothing but a peaceful Greek field drowsing in the sunrise.

"From now on, men, we're on our own," Rogers warned. And on their own they were—twelve uniformed Americans with only a tiny radio to

The jump-signal light flashed . . . . Rogers hurtled through the door.

They shouted in Greek: "That's what we think of the Germans!"

link them to the outside world. If things went right, that radio could summon planes with additional supplies; it could, with luck and a weather-break, get them out of a tight spot by summoning a boat for an evacuation by sea. But other than that remote chance, they were strictly dependent on their own resources, alone in a strange country crawling with German troops.

If they were caught, they knew that the Gestapo torture-chamber and death awaited them. Fifteen of their buddies had been captured and summarily shot by the Nazis on a similar mission in Italy some weeks before. The German radio had boasted of it. Their American uniforms would be no safeguard against their death. They knew that the Gestapo had never heard of the Geneva Convention, and in every man's heart, as he started through the darkness over the hills that night, there was a determination never to be taken alive.

They were all strong, eager young Americans, experts in weapons, demolition, scouting, patrolling. They had been trained in ruthless knife-fighting, and they knew the ways to kill silently in the darkness. They were proud to be members of "Operational Groups," the super-elite fighting force specially recruited by OSS for behind-the-lines work. They felt that they belonged to these Greeks, for most of them were of Greek ancestry, selected from thousands of Greek-speaking GI's to undertake the great mission.

Rogers himself was a bona-fide outdoor man from California and Arizona. In civilian life he was a power-line constructor, and previous to joining OSS had been a demolitions expert in the Corps of Engineers at Fort Belvoir, Virginia. At college he had played varsity halfback for two years, and starred at the one-hundred and two-hundred-twenty, in which he was Border Conference champion. His great-granddad had been a Texas Ranger; his ancestry included a strain of American Indian.

His second in command, Lt. "Smily" Darr, another Westerner, was a veteran of the Forest Service and a superb woodsman. In the "O.G.'s," as the Operational Groups of OSS were known, there was a standing joke about Darr's eyesight; he could, they claimed, "spot a fly at five miles."

In the temporary camp on the wooded slope of a near-by mountain, Rogers took stock. The supplies were in perfect shape, the men in good spirits and ready to go. So far, so good; but by noon that day came word of the first danger: German patrols were scouting the countryside, warned by their radar stations that American "planes" had flown over that night. They were looking for "two hundred well-armed American parachutists." The news was out; and from now on, the danger of ambush would be ever-present.

FOR a few days Rogers lay low. The patrols continued in strength; the strictest control for the entire region was enforced by the Germans. Proclamations were posted in every surrounding village forbidding any movement on the roads in groups larger than two persons. Anyone caught going to or from the mountains or anywhere after dark would be shot on sight. Light German "Stork" planes flew constantly overhead, prowling over the forest, and swooping low over the narrow Greek roads.

The natives in the near-by villages watched in terror as the Nazi patrols marched past; they crept into their houses at the first sign of twilight, walked in fear through their streets.

To lift the morale of the people, two of the Greek-speaking OSS men risked a run into town on the heels of the German patrol one sunny May morning. At first sight of them, the square became alive; American flags appeared; the natives thronged to them with presents of fruit and food, including their precious coffee and sugar. They were joyous at the sight of these American friends who, wonder of wonders, spoke Greek; but they were afraid for their safety—excitedly they pointed at the German edicts posted on the walls.

The Americans grinned at the natives, then walked over to the posters and tore them from the walls. Turning to the shocked group, they shouted in Greek: "That's what *we* think of the damn' Germans!"

For a moment, the Greeks stood in stunned silence. Then up went a mighty shout, a cheer for these fearless *"Americani."* That night twenty new recruits from that Greek village walked into the guerrilla camp in the hills.

The word spread fast; the guerrilla forces swelled with new volunteers. Beautiful young girls and small boys, still too young to be drafted into the German labor gangs, came to offer their services as a part of Captain Rogers' "Underground." Under his guidance, they would walk boldly into the German garrison towns, linger among the soldiers and then stealthily creep through the hills the following night to report to the Americans.

Several days passed in an organized routine, broken by several alerts when the ever-searching Hun patrols were spotted near their camp. Each time they were forced to flee deeper into the mountains. Nights were shrouded in silence except for the secret visits of the guerrilla leaders, and the staccato click of the little radio set that was Rogers' only contact with outside.

They were awaiting the new men now—another section of "OG's" who were to be dropped within a few days. Headquarters had considered it too risky to drop the whole group at one time. The first section had been sent ahead to pave the way—if the Germans caught them, only twelve would be lost. Now, after talking to Major "Mac," Rogers had wired for the rest.

IT was two A.M. that chilly May night when the radio spurted into sudden activity—a message for Rogers: *"Sorry. . . . Expect no men. . . . Plans for your reinforcements canceled. . . . Proceed on 'Staircase' with forces on hand."*

This was a blow; and recalling his bitter disappointment, Rogers admitted he had at first serious doubts as to their ability to go it alone. The "forces at hand"—a round dozen of men, some Garand rifles, submachine-guns, mortars, one Bren gun and one Browning automatic rifle. Then he realized that fewer men had done even greater things than the job that faced his tiny force, simply because they had had the will to do and the courage to go forward.

"I knew my men were not lacking in either. It was a challenge to every one of us. We naturally felt terribly let down, but in a way it made us even more determined to accomplish the job."

The next day they were ready to start.

Men and ammunition were checked; two Greek guerrillas, lithe, hard-muscled mountain men, were to guide. The trail led over rocky brush-strewn mountains; and as they plodded ahead day by day, this tiny American invasion force presented a strange picture in this historic country. They were traveling over a land that for centuries had watched men march to war—the valiant Greek warriors of Athens; the Roman legions; the hordes of Huns; and now, for the first time, American

In a flash he was out of his harness, his pistol clenched in his hand.

GI's in their OD shirts, paratroop boots and green Army field jackets with the tiny American-flag shoulder patches.

The wooded hills were shrouded in silence except for the *clump-clump* of paratroop boots, the carefully placed steps of the rugged little mules and the low whispers of the men. The German patrols were heavy in the area; once settled in their night's bivouac, usually a clump of trees several hundred yards off the trail, Rogers was never sure but that his scouts would spot a patrol and camp would have to be moved in seconds. The men slept in pairs well separated from each other, so that an ambush would never catch the whole group. They were hunted men, and they knew it; but day by day "Staircase" crept closer to its mountain target.

They lived off the land, buying sheep and cornbread and goat's milk. They ate lamb roasted on the spit by the squad cook, who had worked in a Greek restaurant in America. They made their way doggedly through the little Greek villages, patiently answering the questions of excited natives: "Do you know Joe Papalogos in St. Louis? . . . Spiro Zevates in Chicago? . . . Pete Antonopolis in Boston? . . . Nick Pappas in New York?" They met that fabulous woman whose name was a byword in Greece—the "Mother of the Andartes," the forty-five-year-old Red Cross worker who, in a long black dress and heavy British army boots, moved constantly with the front-line soldiers, cheering them, singing for them, drinking with them and binding up their wounds. Through it all Rogers and his men moved quietly, determinedly, mile by mile, fighting their way across a barren country toward the hide-away of Captain Jones, the British officer who awaited them in the target area.

A streak of flame shot skyward. . . . a deafening crack followed. The two bridges! They had done it!

IT took ten long back-breaking days to cover that two hundred miles from the dropping-ground to their destination; then suddenly one afternoon the mountains opened before them; and there below, glistening blue in the sunlight, lay the Bay of Corinth. To their right, winding perilously along the sides of the towering gray-green cliffs of the sea were two winding ribbons—the railroad and the highway.

They were facing their target, the job for which they had spent long weary months of training. Would that training be sufficient to bring these few men to success? Both Rogers and Darr, looking at the men's eager faces, felt a quiet conviction that it would.

Chosen for the demolition were two critically vulnerable points on the line: The major blow was to be at a curve where both the rail and road were cut into the side of a cliff that dropped straight down to the sea below. The second vital spot was where two small bridges—one for the road, the other for the rail, spanned a small river about three-fourths of a mile above the chosen curve.

His first step, Rogers knew, was to contact "Captain Jones." Their meeting took place in a tiny guerrilla hide-out deep in the hills. Rogers found himself face to face with a husky Englishman, in a worn British uniform, his face taut with worry, his voice tense but hopeful. For six long months now, this officer had been risking his life to get this job done. Bad luck and bitter disappointments had thwarted him at every turn. His first supply of explosives had been captured on the landing-field fifteen minutes after it had been dropped; several of his best Greek guerrillas had been killed in the ensuing skirmish, and he himself had just escaped with his life.

The second drop had been successfully accomplished and the explosives stored, when a German patrol, acting on a traitor's tip, had ambushed the camp and seized the whole supply, Jones and his men just managing to get away.

The third supply-drop had taken place just a few days before Rogers' arrival. As Captain Jones stood there, quietly explaining how they had stored the explosive at a spot many miles away from the real target in order to confuse the Germans should they again discover it, the American paratrooper marveled at the man's patience, his determination and his will to get the job done, whatever the cost. It was men like this who kept hope from dying among a conquered people; it was of stuff like this that victory was made.

The Britisher's voice grew more intense as he told the Americans now of what the Germans had done to the people of the village close by. Aware that a major sabotage job was at hand, they had in some way satisfied their blood-lust by committing atrocities upon an innocent people. Just two days ago, searching for information, they had taken an old man and woman, beat them, and then, as they lay moaning in the road, had set fire to their bodies and, jeering, watched them die. Hundreds of houses had been burned and their people tortured; but still the Greeks, defiant and brave, were ready to help their allies in every way they could.

After giving them more information on the area, Jones dropped a bombshell for Rogers and his tired unit.

"I've a message for you," he said briskly. "It looks as though we're going to have to work fast, old chap!"

THE directions over Jones' radio were from headquarters in Cairo, terse and to the point: the operation must take place within three days.

Rogers' first reaction was one of amazement. He said as much to Jones.

"That's impossible! We'll have only a few hours to get ready and do the job. My men are worn out from a ten-day march, and we'll be on the run for God knows how long afterwards. The men can't stand it. How can they rush us like this!"

"Look, old boy, I know how it strikes you," said the Captain wearily. "But that's the way it is. They must have a damn' good reason—maybe they're planning to have the air force take a crack at the traffic that will pile up. It should make some good hunting, at that!"

Andy Rogers' "Okay!" was resigned. "We'll try to do it the way they want it, but I don't like doing it this way. We should have more time—a hell of a lot more. More men, too—but try and tell that to the guys outside!"

Headquarters could not tell them, because they ran the daily risk of capture and torture; but within these cryptic orders was hidden a tremendous secret. Similar commands had crackled out over hidden radios to hundreds of other saboteur groups deep within Hitler's Fortress Europa: "Strike with everything you have—within the next three days!"

That night was long in coming for Rogers, waiting restlessly for the hour when he and Jones would study the target. It was long after midnight when the two men cautiously crept down the mountain path to the railroad and parallel highway.

For months Jones had planned how the tremendous job would be done. He showed Rogers a trail which led down from the mountains to the road

several hundred yards below the curve. A second trail, nothing but a steep rocky slope, had been discovered a hundred yards above the curve, leading from the road down to the sea.

They plotted the maneuver, talking in whispers, alert for any movement in the thick brush or on the road that might mean a German patrol was approaching. Together they planned how the explosive-laden mules would be led in pairs down from the mountain to the road, be galloped up the road and then led carefully down the second trail to where the charges would be placed.

It was at this point that the British officer revealed something to Rogers that was for him the first encouraging development in the whole project. The Italians who had built the highway and the railroad several years before when they had invaded the area, had thoughtfully tunneled demolition chambers deep in the cliff under the road and railway at just the point where the Allied party intended to blow it. These chambers confirmed the desirability of the place, but they also meant that the Germans would patrol this vulnerable point with special vigilance.

The two men stood staring at the chambers. Then Jones said: "Do you think we can drop the road and railroad into the sea, Rogers?"

"How much ammonal have you?"

"Thirty-three hundred pounds, if you need it."

"Cripes! With that we could drop the Golden Gate bridge into San Francisco Bay! If I need it—by God, we'll use it all. We'll give 'em the works!"

"You're okay, Yank," Jones said with a chuckle. "And what's more—" He stopped suddenly. From the road overhead came the sound of guttural voices. A patrol! Had they been seen—would they be discovered? They froze in their places, every muscle rigid. A dog howled dismally near by, his sleep broken by this sudden commotion on the road. Gradually the sounds diminished; the night became still. Relieved, the two men continued their reconnaissance.

To deal with their secondary targets—the road and rail bridges about twelve hundred yards east of the main demolition, it was decided to send a separate group of three men. They were to approach the bridges by a different trail, set their cutting charges and then take off for the first rendezvous. The charges were to be set to go off a few minutes after it was estimated the main blast would take place.

STANDING before his men the next day, Rogers found himself wondering how he could brief them competently and yet keep from betraying the secret fear he felt at thought of what they had to do.

To him and his men had fallen the task of supplying a security force for the blow. They were to be stationed along the cliff overlooking the curve where their fire could effectively deal with any interruption for at least a couple of minutes. This would give the demolition party, if attacked, a chance to drop down the cliff to the sea and escape. As for the Americans—well, they might have to retreat up the mountains in the face of strong enemy fire. Rogers was worried, but

as he stood there before the eager men, he kept his voice confident, his orders crisp and matter-of-fact.

Excitement ran high in the hide-out that day. Feverishly the men worked, stacking the ammunition, cleaning their guns, studying the routes of escape for the hundredth time, blacking their faces, rehearsing the signals, studying the plan. Finally when darkness fell, the twenty mules were loaded with the packages of explosives, watches were synchronized and all was ready. At midnight the twelve men, with Rogers at their head, moved quietly down the mountain.

THE first step was to set up the machine-gun. Rogers placed it, with Lt. Darr in command, about five hundred yards below the curve in the road, in such a position that it could sweep both approaches. The other men, armed with automatics and grenades, were deployed along the hill to either side of the curve.

Rogers himself established his command post on a small bluff immediately over the place where the main charges were to be set. His job was the coördination of the whole operation, in addition to supplying direct cover for Captain Jones, who was to set the charges below.

Rogers' own description of the next hour vividly recalls the drama of the moment. "We were all in position. There was no sound in the darkness. I looked at my watch—one-two A.M. That meant that if everything had gone well, the three men who were to take care of the two bridges were already on their way. It meant that two minutes before, the first pair of loaded mules had been led down the trail from the camp toward the target.

"The pay-off part of Staircase Mission was under way. I felt cold with excitement. We had prepared everything down to the last detail; we'd planned this job for months; and now, with the help of God, within one hour it would be done.

"That hour was the longest one in my life. The clattering of that first pair of mules as they passed down the road beneath me sounded like sharp explosions, it was so still. How the hell could the Germans help but hear that, I thought. I felt sweat trickling down my neck; it prickled against the wool of my jacket. Nothing happened. The mules left the road, and for a few minutes it was quiet again—then they were back.

"Bending down, I picked up a handful of small stones and counted out ten—ten round trips for each pair of mules. I slipped one stone from my left to my right hand—one trip completed.

"The minutes dragged; then I heard them coming again. Down and back; and down and back; and down and back—and three more stones were in my right hand. Off in the darkness, the same dog we'd heard the night before began to bark again. I figured we'd had it—another patrol, and we're caught right in the middle of everything. Damn the luck!

"I told my runner to get his flare ready to give the signal for opening fire. We waited, and then nothing more happened. I relaxed a little, but it made me nervous as hell, because any Jerry hearing the dog would surely be suspicious. To silence him might cause more commotion. I decided to sit still and hope.

"Another pair of mules started down the road. Then I heard someone running toward me from off to the right. The bushes crackled, and I grabbed my Thompson and waited. Whoever it was stopped about ten feet from me. I lay perfectly still, my gun pointed straight at him. Then he whispered the password. It was no German—only the runner from the guys who had set the bridge charges. They had finished their job and were pulling out. That much was done. In another half hour, with luck, we should be on our way out too.

"The dog started to howl some more, but I didn't worry about him so much now. If only those mules would hurry! I kept thinking about what a laugh I would have given anyone in the States who had told me you could move this amount of explosive down a mountain on twenty mules, and lay it under a patrolled road and railroad six hundred miles behind enemy lines. But here it was happening right in front of me, and I was directing it. Wouldn't the Huns be surprised!

"One more trip, and then back came the last pair of mules, galloping like hell down the road to the trail. 'It won't be long now,' I whispered to my sergeant, and told the runner to get ready to go.

"Two men came running up the road. The second one whistled as he passed under me. He was the second last; only Jones was down there now, lighting the fuses.

"I sent the runner to Darr to have him pull all the men out. I waited for Jones. Finally I saw him and started running like hell after him as we took off to get away from the blast."

Rogers didn't remember much of that dash to safety. He is sure that the Border Conference never saw a faster sprint. Finally he caught up with Jones, and panting, asked him: "Is everything okay?"

"You bet," came the reply.

"Sure the fuses are lit?"

"Lit 'em both with a match, and waited till I could see the powder burning." He looked at his watch: "Two minutes—"

They stood tensely staring through the darkness at the target, the only sound their harsh breathing. The dog howled again, and again; and then it came—a mammoth *"Boom"* that left no other sound in the world except its deafening, shattering roar. A massive eruption of black smoke mushroomed skyward.

"God save the King!" shouted Jones, pounding Andy on the back.

Rogers was startled by this ceremonial outburst. Recalling it now, he chuckles: "I felt it was up to me to say something. I yelled the first thing I could think of—

" 'Hurrah for Roosevelt!' "

Together they celebrated like two schoolboys, as dirt and stones rained down on them, though they were three hundred yards from the blast. Then another earth-shattering *"Boom!"* stunned them into silence. It was the reverberation of the blast rocketing back from cañon to cañon across the narrow bay. A brilliant streak of yellow flame shot suddenly skyward to their right. A deafening sharp crack followed—the two bridges. They had done it!

The ear-splitting thunderings of the two blasts burst through the air for almost ten minutes. People in Athens thirty miles away rushed to the streets; German garrisons for miles around were called out. On the hill the two successful saboteurs congratulated each other. But there was just one more job to be done and not much time to do it. Jerry was due any minute. They must go down the hill to the site of the explosion and leave something for the Germans to see.

They found a crater seventy feet wide which extended all the way to the sea sixty feet below where the curve had been. The road and rail had disappeared; their remnants lay now in the churning sea beneath. The ground was smoking, the dirt heaped up in piles. Into one of these they planted their previously prepared message: *"To Colonel———: This job was done by officers and men of the American and British forces. If any Greeks are held as hostages for this act, your name will be submitted to our High Command as a war criminal."*

STAIRCASE MISSION was complete; it was just breaking dawn—the fateful morning of June 6, 1944. Base was contacted, the victorious message coded and sent: *"Mission Successful."* And then they heard the tremendous news—D-Day in Normandy. Now they knew of the transcending importance of their dangerous task. Now they knew why they had been ordered to do it that night. While this tiny Allied force was planting explosives on

a rugged Greek hillside, other American paratroopers fifteen hundred miles away were winging across the channel to spearhead the mighty invasion. Face-blackened American rangers, bent on the same deadly task, were creeping onto French beaches to blast their way through the Atlantic Wall. Other OSS paratroopers were blowing up critical bridges and laying ambushes all over France. North Italy and the Balkans were aflame in the German rear.

And part of the most gigantic coordinated assault ever staged had been Captain Rogers and his men. Their daring job gave the German commander in Greece "invasion jitters," too. The road and rail bridges were effectively cut; and this, plus the huge gap at the curve where the main demolitions had occurred, took the Germans over a month to repair in spite of feverish efforts to reopen their critical supply line.

That morning Eisenhower's legions opened their great drive to the Nazi heart. Aiding his mighty smash were hundreds of dauntless little groups of the OSS and its British counterpart whose yet untold accomplishments afford history's most dramatic pages of victory in World War II.

FOR several days Rogers and his little group, finding new strength in their glorious success, beat their way through the mountains to shake off the German pursuit which they knew to be searching for them. Then came wonderful news from base: They were to race to the seashore and supply the covering party for a large-scale evacuation of a British mission, some deserters from the German army, some Greek refugee families, and best of all—the job completed—they were to evacuate themselves.

By forced marches they headed for the hidden beach pinpoint. While on the way, runners from the Greek underground warned them that a column of eleven hundred Germans were heading for the same seashore rendezvous. It was a race against time, and fortunately the Italian destroyer arrived promptly. The rest of the shore party were taken off in rubber boats, and at last Rogers and his men shoved off. It was none too soon, for the destroyer had just weighed anchor when the first German patrols raced onto the now-abandoned beach. Several days later Captain Rogers and his men were back at base, planning new operations.

Next Month: How one American Marine in the OSS outwitted the Nazis in a series of daring Italian operations —another of these Behind-the-Enemy-Lines stories.

What Does Victory Mean?

by BOOTH TARKINGTON

LAST spring Americans dug into their attics and closets, and many of us literally took the "shirts off our backs," in order to help clothe the wretched people in liberated Europe. By this Christmastime twenty-five million children, men and women will actually have received the American clothes given last April. Yet now many, many more unhappy beings need clothes with a desperation impossible for even the poorest home-living American to understand.

An unclothed man is not only a miserable man; he is a useless, a helpless man. Without clothes he cannot begin to get on his feet at all, and, setting aside simple humanity and decent kindness, it is to the self-interest of every one of us that helpless people everywhere be helped to take care of themselves.

Let us give every scrap of clothing and shoes and bedding and material that can be made into clothes to the Victory Clothing Collection, and with our gifts let us send letters of friendship and encouragement to the strangers we wish to help, so that they will know that the garments come not from a vast impersonal country but from sympathetic fellow-sojourners on this precarious planet.

Victory is a strange word. What does it mean? A wild night of celebration; then the determination to forget what preceded our painful, heroic entry into the Atomic Age? If Victory cannot be made to mean a more sensible world and a friendlier world, then the Atomic Age might be of a too-conclusive brevity.

Second-wind Susie

by EGBERT N. BOWYER

"Five hundred dollars?" Sleepy queried. "That too much?" Happy Jack looked scared. "Guess I talked out of turn," he remarked, "but maybe it'll teach me a lesson." He counted out several bills.

FIVE miles south of Loch Lomond, Florida, lies Hidden Lake. On the north shore a huge grove of mighty, moss-festooned live oaks shade the ground. Picnickers, Boy and Girl Scouts and trysting lovers know the single road which twists its way tortuously through the flat woods and over the surrounding hills. But on the fall and winter nights when the moon is to be full, it is none of these who travel it.

Instead, spring wagons and one-horse rigs, jungle buggies and touring cars, low-slung roadsters and high-wheeled sedans, station-wagons and trucks, funnel into the live-oak grove from a radius of a hundred miles and park well back from the lake against the fringe of encroaching scrub oaks. Axes ring against lightwood logs, and soon campfires light the grove.

The odors of boiling coffee, of bacon crisping, of fish or potatoes or cornbread frying, perfume the air. The sound of man-talk, unexpurgated, may be heard. And only a deaf man could fail to identify the hound-talk, ranging from eager whines and bell-like baying to snarls of warning or of anger.

If you happen to be Pete Lord's guest, as I was this night, he'll take you down to the edge of the lake, a hundred yards away from the campfire, and explain that the shrill yapping heard faintly in the distance is the friendly fox of Hidden Lake, herding his shrewish mate to a place of safety before retracing his steps down Turner's Creek and giving the hounds the once-over.

I tried to see the expression on Pete's face in the darkness, but failing, replied: "What are you trying to do, hand me a bunch of malarkey?"

Pete chuckled. "You heard the yapping, didn't you?"

"Yes," I admitted.

"I've been hunting this same fox for three years," Pete said, "and he always acts the same. First, he has a hell of a time convincing his old lady that she'd better crawl out of her warm den and wade up the creek and then lope over the hill so she'll be in the clear. Finally he does, and then you don't hear any more out of him as he comes back down the creek.

"Time he gets back to the lake, which'll be in a minute or two now, he'll yap a few times I don't know whether it's to tell his old lady she can relax, or to let the hounds know he's on the job About five minutes after he yaps, you'll think all hell has broken loose in camp. That'll be when he comes over to say hello to the hounds, and show folks like you who've never seen a fox except in a zoo, or skinned and around some woman's neck, what an honest-to-God fox really looks like."

"Pete, of all the fairy—" I began.

"Hush!" Pete interrupted. "Listen, and you'll hear him yap."

"Well, I'll be damned!" I exclaimed, as an unmistakable barking carried across the waters.

"Let's get back to camp so's to be sure the dogs are tied up good," Pete said. "We don't want the hunt to start till the moon's an hour high."

Nearing the campfire, Pete shouted: "See that your dogs are tied up tight, fellows! The fox is due to pay us a visit."

and the Friendly Fox

Pete may have been kidding me, but if he was, he kidded every hound-owner too, for they left the fire in a bunch, and following Pete's example, saw to it that their hounds were securely tied or penned in dog-crates which adorned the rear ends or the running-boards of their cars.

Pete and the others had just returned to the fire when every hound in camp went wild. Barking, baying, whining, moaning, the din was so loud we didn't hear the approach of a belated car, and the headlights momentarily blinded us as it swung into a parking space at the end of the line.

As a deep-throated bell-like baying and a high-pitched soprano baying joined in the chorus, Pete remarked: "Must be a stranger, by the sound of his hounds."

A moment later, a short round man wearing a floppy broad-brimmed hat came waddling toward the campfire. The bottoms of his trouser-legs were stuffed into his hunting boots, which were laced only across his insteps.

Pete walked over to meet him and said: "My name's Pete Lord. Glad to have you with us."

The stranger's face beamed. "I'm Happy Jack Simms from Simmstown, South Carolina," he replied. "Happened to be visiting in Loch Lomond, and heard y'all were planning to have a fox-hunt, so brought my dogs out, hoping maybe they'd learn something. God knows, they can stand it."

Pete introduced Happy Jack Simms to the crowd which gathered around, then asked: "What sort of dogs do you have?"

"They're kind of a strange pair," Happy Jack replied. "Rex, he's mostly foxhound with maybe a dash of bloodhound, way back up the line; and Second-wind Susie is a beagle."

"A beagle!" someone snorted.

Happy Jack grinned self-consciously. "Like I said, it's kind of a queer combination, but they seem to pull together. Course I aint never hunted 'em against no good dogs, so maybe I'm just being reckless with my money, but I'm willing to bet a dollar or two they'll do all right."

"What do you mean, 'all right'?" asked Sleepy Andrews, who'd bet on anything, any time, if he thought the odds were in his favor.

Happy Jack's moon-shaped face crinkled into a helpless sort of smile. "Does this fox run in a circle, like most of 'em, or does he lope out across country and end up in the next county?"

Pete replied: "He always has run round and round the lake. It's most likely he'll run the same race again tonight. He's a right accommodating fox. He'll be showing up in a minute, in case you'd like to talk to him."

Happy Jack winked at Pete and shook his head all at the same time.

"In that case," he said to Sleepy, "I mean Rex'll be leading the pack the first time round, on account of he's an awful fast starter, and that Susie'll be leading the pack the second time round, on account of it takes her a while to get her second wind. That's why I call her Second-wind Susie."

Pete shook his head slowly. "Course it's a free country, Mr. Simms, and a man has a right to scatter his money around careless-like if he wants to, but I think it's only fair to warn you: There's a heap of mighty fine dogs out here tonight, and a heap of folks who believe in them, so don't stick your neck out too far."

"Thank you, Pete," Happy Jack said. "It's all right to call you Pete, isn't it? And you call me Happy Jack so I'll kind of feel at home. But I guess I'm just a natural-born fool when it comes to believing in my own dogs. And besides, I seem to get more kick out of a foxhunt when I've got a few dollars on it."

Sleepy Andrews and some of his pals got their heads together.

"Mind if we take a look at your dogs?" Sleepy asked. "We don't want to have you running a sandy over us."

"Not at all, gentlemen," answered Happy Jack with a smile. "I'll fetch 'em over to the fire."

He waddled off, returning in a minute with Rex and Susie.

Rex, except for his face and a bit of length in his legs, could have taken his place unquestioned in any gathering of foxhounds. But he was a bit too leggy for perfect conformation, and his sad-eyed face and slightly pendulous jowls bore out Happy Jack's statement that there was probably a dash of bloodhound way back up the line. Second-wind Susie was beagle, every sleek hair of her; and beside the leggy Rex she seemed to have her belly almost on the ground.

"They kind of remind me of Mutt and Jeff," Happy Jack said shyly.

REX and Susie had been standing quietly, but suddenly both darted the length of their leashes and gave tongue.

"There's the fox!" exclaimed Pete. "Just beyond the circle of firelight, with his eyes green as emeralds."

I looked; and there, walking as daintily as if upon eggs, a fox came slowly toward us. He stopped about fifty paces away and sat down and eyed us. Then he yawned, scratched tentatively at a flea beneath his left ear, then lay down with his head resting on his front feet.

"Always did figure the fox enjoyed the hunt good as anybody," Happy Jack said softly. "But this is the first time I ever saw one come up to a campfire and lay down, just as much as to say, 'I'm ready when y'all are.'"

"Friendliest fox you ever saw in your life," Pete remarked, "and the smartest. I've always believed he was partly tamed when he was a pup, and would come to you if you'd whistle."

"Let's try it," said Happy Jack, puckering up his lips.

AT the soft, friendly whistle which emerged, the fox raised his head and looked inquiring. "Here, boy!" called Happy Jack, and the fox got to his feet, took two tentative steps forward, then turned his bushy tail and trotted off into the night.

"Believe you're right, Pete," Happy Jack said. "But he's not tame any more."

Sleepy Andrews returned to the business in hand.

"It's nearly a month before Christmas," Sleepy said, eying Happy Jack, "but maybe Santa Claus is making an early start this year. Just how big a contribution do you want to make?"

Happy Jack smiled. "I'm willing to pay right smart for my fun, and cotton fetched a good price this year so make it light on yourselves."

He opened his billfold, took out a bill and handed it to Pete.

"We'll let Pete hold stakes," he suggested. "He's got ten dollars of my money to cover all bets."

Sleepy Andrews yawned. "I thought you wanted to bet, but if that's the best you can do, I'll let one of my boys cover it."

Happy Jack's face grew solemn. "All I wanted was to have a little fun," he explained, "but since I stuck my neck out, I guess it's up to me to back my mouth with my money. Suppose you name what you want to speculate, Mr. Andrews, and I'll cover as much as I can."

"Five hundred dollars?" Sleepy queried. "That too much?"

Happy Jack looked scared, wide-eyed. Then his jaw set in a determined line. "Guess I talked out of turn," he remarked, "but maybe it'll teach me a lesson."

He counted out several bills and handed them to Pete.

Sleepy Andrews did likewise, then asked: "Another two hundred you made a bad bet?"

Happy Jack jumped back, startled. Then he grinned, bravely. "My Pa always told me education was expensive, but before we start gambling too heavy, let's understand ours is a double-barreled bet:

"First, I'm betting Rex leads the pack the first time round. That'll take up half the money. Second, I'm betting Susie is leading the pack the second time round. That'll take up the other half."

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Sleepy. "You can't crawfish that way. The bet is, Rex leads the pack the first time round, and Susie leads it the second. If either dog don't show up leading the pack, you lose. Aint that right, fellows?"

"That's the bet," chorused the men.

Happy Jack appealed to Pete. "How about it?"

Pete shook his head. "The bet, as I understood it," he said, "is that Rex leads the pack the first time round and Susie the second. It makes it tough on you, Happy Jack, but it was your own proposition. Maybe the best thing to do is call all bets off and start the hunt. The moon's climbing pretty high."

"No," Happy Jack said, "that wouldn't be right. The bet stands as you stated it, and since I'm hooked anyway, I'll cover the other two hundred so I'll be sure not to make the same mistake some other time."

The final stakes were handed to Pete. Everybody shook hands all around to show there were no hard feelings, and then everyone went to get their hounds.

When Pete came back with his three hounds straining at their leashes, he turned them over to me to hold while he took a stick and drew a line through the leaves just beyond the campfire. When the other huntsmen returned with their dogs—and there must have been a hundred of them—Pete said:

"Since there's bets on this hunt, everybody keep their dogs back of the line. When I count up to three, turn your dogs loose, and may the best dog win!"

With a hundred eager hounds straining at their leashes, Pete counted to three, leashes were unloosed, and the pack was off.

Short-legged Susie evidently had a good memory, for her high-soprano

The fox increased his speed, climbed nimbly up the rough-barked trunk and ran along a huge limb.

yelp of joy pealed into the night as soon as she'd covered the short distance which separated her from the place the fox had made his appearance and exit from a few moments before.

For ten seconds Susie's short legs carried her in advance of the pack, then Pete's Molly gave tongue, followed by so many other hound-voices no one but their owners could have identified them.

As the pack vanished into the gallberry and myrtle bushes which edged the live-oak grove to the south, Susie was trailing behind, her short legs taking two strides to the other hounds' one.

Different owners whooped with joy as first one and then another hound gave tongue and was recognized. Happy Jack and Sleepy, their betting seemingly forgotten in the thrill of the hunt, took turns congratulating Pete on his Molly, whose triumphant voice proclaimed to all the world that she was still leading the pack.

Pete grinned proudly. "Molly's a fine dog until the fox takes to water, but she's not old enough yet to outsmart this fox. In about three minutes now, you'll hear Molly hush up, and all the other dogs too, for that matter, till they work out the trail after the fox hits Reedy Creek. Sometimes he'll go up the creek a ways, sometimes down, and sometimes he'll jump or swim straight across, depending on where he happens to be. Sleepy's Ben is generally the hound that picks up the trail on the other side; seems he thinks the same way as the fox, but not always."

As Pete had predicted, a sudden hush filled the air, broken by little yelps and whines as the eager hounds lost the scent at the creek.

"Three creeks flow into and one creek out of Hidden Lake," Pete explained for Happy Jack's benefit, "and it's about a mile and a half around. This old fox knows every foot of ground around the lake and usually makes five or six round trips before losing the dogs down in the marsh below the outlet and calling it a day."

OFF to our right, a bell-like baying, true and clear, rang through the night.

Pete whooped with joy. "Hi! Molly!" he shouted and then turned to us and asked: "What do you know? Molly worked it out!"

"Ben's in there close!" Sleepy shouted jubilantly, as a deeper voice rang through the night, followed almost instantly by the pack in full cry.

As suddenly as it had given tongue, the pack silenced and then, to the left of the pack, the high-soprano voice of Susie, quickly echoed by the bass-voiced tongue of Rex, floated to our ears and Happy Jack shouted encouragement.

"Always did figure the fox enjoyed the hunt good as anybody," Happy Jack said, "but this is the first time I ever saw one come up to a campfire, just as much as to say, 'I'm ready when y'all are!'"

Looking at Sleepy, he nodded his head wisely and said: "I told you they're a strange pair but they work together."

Then Sleepy whooped, for Susie's voice and Rex's were stilled as Ben's deep-toned voice told the world he was on the trail and he don't mean maybe.

Other dogs' voices were heard and identified and other owners whooped with joy, as the fox led the pack across the bridge over the outlet, at the south end of Hidden Lake, and up to Sandy Stream before losing them again.

"He'll cross Turner's Creek by the foot-log the first time, I'll betcha," Sleepy announced, "and come helling through the grove here in a few minutes with the pack right behind him in full cry. Everybody keep your eyes open so there won't be any argument about which dog is leading the pack."

"Reckon he'll climb up the leaning tree like he sometimes does?" asked Pete. "If he does, the first dog to the tree will be leading."

"I'd forgotten about that for a minute," Sleepy answered, swiftly. "See that leaning tree, Happy Jack?" He pointed to a live oak, a hundred feet away, which a storm had blown partly over years before. "Sometimes the fox runs right up the trunk to the first branch and along it till he gets to the ground again. Damnedest sight you ever saw, the way the hounds look when they all try to climb up the tree at the same time."

Pete cut in: "He's crossed the foot-log, fellows, and ought to be showing up in a minute. Watch closely," he said to Happy Jack and me; "he usually comes out of the clump of myrtle down by the lake."

The full moon was two hours high, lighting the scene perfectly.

"Here he comes!" whispered Pete.

Like a fog stealing silently upon the land, the fox emerged from the bushes, running easily as though he were caressing the ground with the tips of his toes. Straight for the leaning tree he trotted until he was a few feet from it; then he increased his speed and climbed nimbly up the rough-barked trunk and ran along a huge limb which sloped gradually to the ground. Reaching the ground, he ran a few paces, sat down and scratched at a flea, then stood up and trotted off

Illustrated by Edward Shenton

The fox gave a short bark before running between Pete and Happy Jack, rounding the campfire in a burst of speed, and vanishing into the shadows beyond.

toward the gallberry and myrtle bushes to the south.

He was still in sight when, from the myrtle bushes, the pack exploded in full cry.

If the fox was like fog, the pack was like thunder and lightning. They made an unforgettable picture as they followed the fox's trail across the leaf-covered ground.

"You, Rex!" shouted Happy Jack, his voice ringing clearly above the other shouting voices.

As if in response to a will stronger than his own, from the pack which raced down upon the leaning tree, a long-legged hound with pendulous jowls moved out in front and, as though he were a frightened squirrel seeking sanctuary, ran up the tree trunk without breaking pace.

Happy Jack sighed. Sleepy cursed. Then both joined in the whooping and laughter as the entire pack tried to follow Rex up the leaning tree.

The dogs in the middle were hot on Rex's heels but the dogs to right and left were pushed off the sloping trunk to fall upon the bulk of the pack which was shouldered past the tree.

For an instant, it was a tangled mass of dogs and then a mad scramble as the pack followed the triumphant voices of Happy Jack's Rex, Pete's Molly, and Sleepy's Ben, now running shoulder to shoulder toward the myrtle and gallberry bushes into which the fox had vanished.

The rest of the pack was just entering the bushes when frantic, soprano-voiced Susie burst out of the bushes from which first the fox and then the pack had emerged. Head to the ground, short legs flying, she raced toward the leaning tree, clawed her way up the trunk, ran cautiously out across the limb the fox had chosen and then, back upon solid ground again, took out after the pack.

"Good girl, Susie!" Happy Jack shouted while, all about him, jeers and laughter reverberated.

"All you need is a beard and a red suit and you'd be Santa Claus!" whooped Sleepy exultantly. "Want to tell Pete to pay off now? Or don't you know when you're licked?"

Happy Jack grinned. "I've won half my bet, anyway, Sleepy. Aint no use giving up yet."

"By the sound of things," Pete remarked, "the fox is going to give 'em all a chance to get their second wind. The smart rascal has jumped Reedy Creek and lit out for the bridge across the outlet without even slowing down."

"Likely as not," Sleepy put in, "he'll jump off the bridge this time and swim down the creek a bit. I've watched him, other times, down at the bridge, and he just lopes off into the water like he was an otter, 'stead of a fox. He's got more tricks than Carter's got oats.

"Yep! That's what he's done! Listen to them hounds as they fan out!"

"Yay! Bruno!" shouted clarion-voiced Bill Janks, on the other side of the fire, as he recognized the bugling voice of his dog, followed a moment later by the baying of the pack. "Bruno outsmarted him that time! Bet the old scoundrel was sitting on the bank, waiting for him to come out of the creek!"

"That Bruno's smart all right," shouted Sleepy, generously, "and by the sound of things, he's two whoops and a holler ahead of the pack."

"Wait'll that fox hits Sandy Stream!" challenged another voice. "If my Bess don't outsmart him there, there aint a bird-dog in Georgia!"

The belling hound-voices ceased. A hound with a quavering, yodeling voice took up the trail.

"Georgia's in a hell of a fix!" shouted a slender chap who stood at my elbow. "Who called my Mike a rabbit dog?"

SILENT as a wisp of smoke in the moonlight, the fox broke from the thicket. Mouth slightly open, tongue hanging out, tail low to the ground, he sailed, rather than ran, toward the leaning tree.

Like a fire-truck leaving the station, soprano-voiced Susie burst out of the thicket in full tongue. Her short legs spurning the ground, she was closing the thirty-foot gap between her and the fox.

With a "What the hell?" sort of expression on his face, the fox glanced over his shoulder. Seeing Susie right on his heels, he sprinted for the leaning tree. Passing it the way a pay train passes a tramp, he ran through the tangled branches on the ground,

altered his course and headed straight for our campfire.

His timing was poor, for he'd cleared the branches before Susie reached the tree; and seeing him, Susie altered her course to intercept him.

As though to applaud Susie, the fox gave a short bark before running between Pete and Happy Jack, rounding the campfire in a burst of speed, and vanishing into the shadows.

Susie saw the fire just in time, and plowed up leaves for five feet as she stiffened her legs to slow down before darting around the fire right after the fox.

With Bruno and Molly running shoulder to shoulder, and Rex, Ben and Mike at their flanks, the pack burst from the bushes at this instant; and we, who had been standing around the campfire, moved swiftly aside.

Some dogs rounded the fire in full stride but most of them followed Susie's example and plowed leaves with their forefeet as they slowed down before running around it.

Off through the line of parked vehicles, out into the scrub oaks, then back past Happy Jack's car at the end of the line the fox left his trail.

We must all have had our backs turned when the fox slipped through the grove and followed his cooling trail past the leaning tree and through its branches again before heading south into the myrtle and gallberry bushes, but the keen noses of the hounds led them unerringly.

Unerringly, that is, until they reached the spot among the branches of the leaning tree where the fox must have jumped far to one side! Rex and Ben burst out of the branches and headed again for the campfire while Molly, Mike, and Bruno set up the complaining whining of hounds who've lost the trail.

Rex and Ben immediately began casting, one to right, the other to the left and the pack fanned out until a contralto-voiced hound announced she'd found it again.

"Atta girl, Bess!" whooped her owner. "Where was Mike on that deal?" he challenged.

"You hear him!" shouted the slender chap, as Mike's voice rose above the pack.

Somewhere out in the scrub oaks, the fox had thrown Susie off trail, for now she came dashing past the fire, unmindful of the trail followed by the pack, and lit out as fast as she could run for the stragglers just vanishing into the bushes.

As the shouting died down, Sleepy walked over and shook hands with Happy Jack. "I wouldn't have believed it, if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes!" he exclaimed. "Your dogs proved you wasn't nearly as reckless with your money as we were with ours."

Turning to Pete, Sleepy said, "Pay the gentleman his money, Pete, and the next time I open my big mouth, remind me I'm a fool."

Happy Jack led the laughter which followed and then he patted Sleepy on the back. "You're a good sport, Sleepy, and so are your friends, and I'm plumb happy to have got acquainted with every one of you."

Turning to Pete, Happy Jack said: "Pete, give Sleepy back all his money except one ten-dollar bill. I didn't come out here to gamble; I just came to watch a fox-hunt and listen to the dogs and get acquainted. I aim to frame the ten-dollar bill I'm keeping to remind me, later on, of what a fine time I'm having tonight."

"But it's your money!" Pete protested.

"I know it," Happy Jack replied, "but it's a free country so I'm giving six hundred and ninety dollars back to Sleepy and his friends. Ten dollars won't hurt 'em any and it'll remind 'em, from now on, not to gamble on the other fellow's game.

"Next time the fox comes by, I'm going to show y'all something that'll explain things."

PETE counted out Happy Jack's seven hundred and ten dollars and handed the rest to Sleepy. Sleepy didn't want to take it but Happy Jack insisted, saying all he wanted was a souvenir.

A few minutes later the hunt rounded the lake again and from the myrtle bushes the fox again emerged. Hard on its heels, soprano-voiced Susie came bursting out of the thicket.

With a look of dismay and surprise, the fox looked over his shoulder before putting on a burst of speed which carried him past the leaning tree like homing ducks crossing a marsh at dusk and left Susie hopelessly outdistanced.

Happy Jack shouted: "Susie! Aint you ashamed?"

Susie's stiffened legs plowed through the leaves as she came to an abrupt halt. With head held low and tail wagging ingratiatingly, she advanced toward Happy Jack.

"Aint you ashamed, Susie," he accused, "trying to fool all these nice folks into thinking what a hell of a foxhound you are? And, all the time, you know and I know all you are is a short-legged, smart-brained, hammered-down beagle."

Still wagging her tail ingratiatingly, Susie drew closer to Happy Jack.

"Now apologize to these folks. Tell 'em you're sorry."

With the pack in full cry, streaking across the grove, Susie sat down, lifted her muzzle to the stars, and howled disconsolately.

"That'll be enough," Happy Jack said; "your apology is accepted. Now stick around camp where I can keep my eye on you."

Susie bounded to her feet and ran up to Happy Jack. As he reached down and patted her head, resting against his leg, he said:

"Susie just naturally loves to run a fox, but she's got sense enough to know she's too slow to ever outrun one. Somehow, being a right smart hound, she figured out that foxes most generally run in a circle. So after the first time round to get the lay of the land, Susie slips around the campfire and back-tracks a little way before lying low till the fox comes along again.

"When he does, she lights out, right on his tail, and fools herself and lots of other folks into believing she's hell on wheels.

"But Rex! Now, he's a real, honest-to-God foxhound. Listen to that scoundrel go!"

The Pledge of Honor

Exploring France for buried treasure with a mine detector, a former American officer stumbles into startling situations

by H. BEDFORD-JONES

WE were heading north from Cabourg; along the coast ahead lay little Norman towns—Villers, Houlgate, Deauville and so forth—built up with villas in between, the *plages* still studded with anti-invasion blocks and wrecks of many a landing-craft and tank, though the war was long over.

"It was here, my good Murchison, that our mine-detectors helped win the war," I said.

"Right, my good Carson, right," he assented, barely avoiding a smash with a Caen bus, and keeping our rattly old Fiat to the road. "We provide the genius to save the Army; the generals get the glory; and the dogfaces never give us a thought. They don't even know that Nazi mines would have blown them all to glory, except for you and me."

"Well, practically so," I agreed. "Where's the place that we pick up Gondy?"

"Use your eyes, blind boy! See those real-estate signs? Dead ahead,

they say, lies the beautiful Beaulieu-sur-Mer—probably a lot of jerry-built rat-traps with pottery cats on the roofs and surrounded by brummagem summer villas."

We abused each other and the French landscape impartially, being old friends from boyhood days in Boston, and very happy. We would be still happier when we picked up our pal Gondy—the Vicomte de Gondy—whom we had not seen for a week past.

WAR'S end had found us in England, dodging buzz-bombs and slaving in laboratories to invent mine-detectors that would outwit the newest land mines of the Jerries. We did it, or helped to do it, and wangled a discharge and set out to see Europe and make our fortune. As a means to this end, we took along our cherished invention, the Baby, which had flopped as a mine detector, but whose radionic waves would pick buried treasure out of the ground like nobody's business.

We took in Gondy because we liked him. Also, he was the contact man we needed. He knew Europe like a book, and everyone in it, and was apt at locating lost or buried treasure for us to unearth. What sort of job we had here on the Norman coast we did not yet know; he had gone ahead to make arrangements. Murchison and I did not get along too blissfully with the French lads, to be frank about it.

Beaulieu proved to be a crossroads with a liquor shop, a post office and a summer hotel perched above the beach. We went into the liquor shop and found Gondy; and after a hilarious greeting perched at his table. He had located a bottle of Scotch, and when we had approved his judgment we got down to business.

"A mile from here," he said, "home awaits us. I have rented a summer villa, complete with a *bonne à tout faire,* or maid-of-all-work. Does that please you?"

"Whatever you do suits us," I replied with cautious gallantry. "However, I recall that the lure which brought us here said something about buried treasure."

Gondy waved his hand. "Later, Carson, later! Here we shall repose like the fabled lotus-eaters, knowing no one, with nobody knowing or caring about our business, and nobody to split with if we recover anything."

"Is there anything to recover?" demanded Murchison warily.

"You'll be surprised, *mon ami!* Come, let us be on our way."

We all headed north in the old Fiat. Now, we knew that Gondy had his head in the clouds and might get us into some screwy situation quite innocently; but whatever was done, was done. We could not let him down. He was our kind of guy, and on the level.

Beaulieu was practically nothing except a lot of villas running along the flank of a long hill. The villas lay on the left of the road, their grounds extending to the beach below. On the right were other villas, the hillside running steeply up behind them. Some of the houses were occupied; some had been bombed or burned during the war.

Gondy halted us at an open gate, and we turned down into our new domain, which sloped gently seaward, and we were pleased as Punch with it. The house was small, two-storied, simply furnished and beautifully clean. During the Nazi occupation it had sheltered a Vichy collaborator named Forain, a thorough rascal who happily had since been shot.

The servant, Yvonne, was dark and clumpy and mustached, with rough, heavy hands and vacant eyes. As Gondy laconically explained, she had been shipped off with a lot of local people as labor slaves by the Nazis, and her mind had been slightly affected by their cruelty. She was just pleasantly amiable and dumb, and saluted us in the startling but unconcerned manner of French peasants seeking to be friendly, when we shook hands.

"I am enchanted, messieurs," she said. "*Je suis vierge encore—c'est très rare,* I assure you, in this district. You will find me very honest."

Murchison swallowed hard. To her, the fact that she was a virgin was merely a good indication of her character, a recommendation to cause some pride. But his expression made me and Gondy chuckle.

The grounds were large, dotted with trees, and completely fenced in by most efficient French fences, a gate in the lower fence giving access directly on the beach. Trees hid the adjoining villas and the road; we were absolutely out of the world here, entirely private. Just below the house, was a rough square of concrete—a gun emplacement installed by the Germans to help fight off invasion.

YVONNE, who lived in a dark little room off the kitchen—our rooms were upstairs—had lunch ready for us.

The meal ended, we climbed into bathing-suits and went down to the beach. Thanks to the war, mines, Nazi obstructions and so forth, we had it to ourselves; normally, said Gondy, it would be crowded with tourists in summer. Deauville was not far off, and whenever we wanted a touch of fun, it would not be hard to find. From the beach we could see up along

I knew why Buck was in love. She had dignity, pride, tenderness.

the coast and across the Seine estuary to Le Havre, which was still practically a heap of ruins.

"Before getting to the situation," Gondy began, "I should say that at the Beaulieu hotel an Englishman is stopping who would much like to rent one of our rooms and make this place his headquarters. He would not be here much; he spends most of his time running about the back-country in a vest-pocket Austin car. He's a war veteran, and a trifle balmy."

"Good God, man! Are you starting a lunatic asylum?" exploded Murchison. "First that cook, and now a goofy Britisher!"

There were moments when Gondy could become very French, and this was one of them.

"My country, Murch, has an axiom that all English are mad," he said stiffly. "That does not mean insane, but just a bit off. Let me explain: Lord Arthur Buckleden was in the commandos, later became a paratrooper. He was dropped somewhere around here in advance of D Day—the invasion. He was hurt. A farmer's daughter saved him, took care of him and later brought him to safety. He became—ah—amorous of her, and now is trying to find her again. He inherited enormous wealth; that is, as much wealth as any Englishman has these days."

"What does this Lord Buckledown want with our place?" growled Murchison.

"He is lonely," said Gondy, "and in love, hopeless love."

"The hell with him—" began Murch, then met my eye and sniffed. "Well, we'd better meet him and size him up before we say yes or no. Is he a real lord?"

"Oh, quite!" said Gondy. "I knew him during the war. I was liaison officer with his corps. He did not tell anyone then that he was a lord; Wemyss, was the name he used."

"Weems!" repeated Murchison, sourly wrinkling up his features. "I thought we were done with all those English words they call names. Well, never mind; get along with it. Where does the treasure come in?"

Gondy brightened. "Ah! I am coming to that. Well, this collaborator, this Forain who lived in our house, was taken by surprise on D Day, like the Krauts themselves. He had been an art dealer and was a connoisseur. Regard, now! While living here, he made trips to the south of France, everywhere, taking choice pictures."

"Oh!" I said. "Looting museums?"

"No, no; he left that to his Nazi friends. He took only the finest things in private collections, and occasionally from churches—the choicest art of the past few centuries. Nothing large, you comprehend; often the finest in art is in smallest compass, like triptychs or altar-pieces. Nearly all these things were privately owned. If found, they do not have to be handed over to any commission."

"But they belong to somebody, not to us," I objected.

Gondy assented vigorously.

"Just so. A group of dealers in Paris, representing the owners, have already offered three million francs for the recovery of the Forain loot—that is, the new francs, not the old Vichy money! Let us say, in dollars, a hundred thousand—I think we can get them up to that figure. Not bad, eh?"

Not bad, indeed; half of that sum would be very handsome if we earned it. We had already learned that buried treasure, contrary to fallacious popular belief, very seldom runs into any big money. A wrecked vessel with bullion aboard, perhaps might do better. As a rule the results, although eminently satisfactory to us, were intrinsically not large. Yet they were large enough to keep us on Easy Street, always with hopes of striking something big lying just over the horizon. And meantime, the zest of the game was keen.

"All right," Murchison said abruptly. "Where's the stuff hidden?"

Gondy inspected him with half-quizzical amusement.

"Somewhere in our garden, Murch. I doubt whether the machine could react from a mere bunch of canvases; but they'd be well packed. Forain had little warning, no time to get his stuff away, when the American forces broke through at St. Lo, and the German rout began. He did not even get himself away; the partisans caught him and shot him, a couple of days later. It's common local gossip that the stuff was buried here. Germans were all the time digging along this hillside, installing guns and emplacements."

"Surely you have something more definite than that?" I demanded.

"No." He spread out his hands, helplessly. "It should be enough. We need a rest. It is pleasant here. The local people do not guess our objective. I can name you some of the pictures Forain seized; many are famous."

OUR sense of loyalty kept us silent. Neither Murchison nor I cared for this job. Pictures! We were after cash. And this Lord Buckleden did not attract us; we wanted privacy. The whole set-up was cockeyed, I thought. So we arranged to have His Lordship over for dinner, if possible, and Gondy went to get hold of him.

Murchison and I went into the water. There were signs up forbidding it, and quoting rather hysterically the danger from mines and so forth; this section of the *plage* had not yet been cleared, for lack of manpower. Some of the local pussyfoots got excited, and two police agents came along and whistled. We had a good swim and did not come in until we got ready; but it was no joke when we did come. It was pretty near a riot, because Gondy was not on hand to do his stuff, and Murchison took the stand that if we wanted to get blown up, that was our business and the police be damned.

We ended up down the beach at the *mairie* and paid a twenty-franc fine each—or rather Yvonne, who was doing her marketing at the time, paid for us, and we went home. When Gondy came along with word that Buckl'en, as it was pronounced, would be over for dinner, having just got in from one of his back-country trips, it made a fitting end to a perfectly frabjous day, as we declared bitterly.

And what fools we were! We were having a drink when Buckleden showed up with a bottle of real Scotch and a big package—steaks he had fetched home from a farm inland. He was a rather short but strapping chap with no haw-haw accent—in fact, he had spent some years in Canada; instead of being cross-eyed he just had a cast in one eye; and as long as we did not talk about the war, he had a good grin and knew how to tell a story. He was dark, strong in the face, and a right guy. Inside of twenty minutes he was "Buck" to us all and we were on the best of terms, and he agreed to move over in the morning.

An odd thing took place that same evening: Buck turned to us with a quiet word, as Yvonne was serving coffee in the sitting-room; she seemed to think it should be served in there.

"Do you mind if I ask your maid something?"

"Why should we mind? Of course not," said Murchison, who was not very much on the European politeness.

Buck, who spoke fluent French, beckoned Yvonne.

"Will you let me look at that little cross you're wearing, if you please?"

Yvonne's hand went to her throat, where she wore, on a white ribbon, a tiny gold cross. Her dull features remained unchanged. She slipped off the ribbon and handed it to him.

As he looked at the cross, I saw an extraordinary change in his dark features. They became darker, under a rush of blood. His eyes dilated; for an instant I thought he would leap to his feet. Then he relaxed and nodded at the girl.

"Will you take a thousand francs for this little cross? No? Five thousand?"

I thought he had gone mad, sure enough; the thing was not worth a

dollar. Then I was astounded when Yvonne refused point-blank. A sullen fear shone in her eyes, and she held out her hand for the thing back. Buck handed it to her.

"Where did you get it?" he asked.

She shook her head. "I don't remember, m'sieur. It brought me safe home out of the hands of the Boches."

She went away, indifferently. Buck looked excited, then repressed his emotions.

"What's that girl's history? Do you chaps know?" he asked.

"She was swept up with a lot of other slave labor from around here, by the Krauts," said Gondy, "and was freed when they went to pieces, and somehow got home. I understand she suffered a good deal and it affected her wits. She came from a farm somewhere near by. I can give you the name, if you care for it."

Buck nodded, and wrote it down. "I thought that I recognized the cross," he said apologetically. "It's like a million others, of course."

We asked no questions, understanding that it probably had some connection with his curious search.

NEXT morning he showed up in his tiny Austin, put his stuff in our spare room, chugged off and was gone for two days. That brought us up to Saturday night; and we all went up to Deauville and hit the tables and drank too much, and later were sorry we put in so many dances with the gold-diggers from Paris. . . .

On Sunday morning Buck routed us up early and made us all go to church at Villers. That we did it indicates what we thought of him by this time. And that afternoon, sunning ourselves on the *plage,* we got confidential with him. We told him about the Baby, and he told us about his search. He was not a damned bit sentimental about it, either.

"This lass, Jeanne Duchesne, lived on her father's farm, but she was not the peasant type like your Yvonne," he said. "I've established that she and her father were rounded up with others for a labor battalion by the Nazis close to D Day—this must have been just after she saved my life. No word has come from them; nobody knows what became of them, though others have filtered back home since the war. She may be all right; she may be in some desperate situation and badly needing help. I can't let her down, of course. Sure to strike someone, if I keep at it, who knew her or what became of her. More of the poor devils are coming home all the time."

He did not mention romance; nor, of course, did we. When we told of our business here and explained what the Baby was, he was a bit incredulous at first, then considered us a trifle weak in the head—good fellows and all that, but gently touched. He really took little interest in the whole thing. He was wrapped up in his own affairs, naturally.

After taking what would have settled half a dozen ordinary mortals, big Michel folded.

Monday morning he got off in the Austin for another trip, somewhere back of the Caen ruins, where he had heard some D.P.'s were getting repatriated. That dark face of his held a grave determination.

Meantime we had not neglected our own affair, though we had not worked very hard at it, either. We pushed the Baby around one part of the garden, and we got results—the kind of results that made us curse our job and think about going in for honest work. We had to do our own digging, remember. We located a handsome big sea mine, unexploded; a packing-case filled with Teller mines, ditto; and on top of these nerve-racking experiences, we brought up another packing-case marked "Cognac" and completely filled with a Nazi officer who must have been killed about D Day and buried hastily. After this we seriously considered ditching the job entirely. Instead, we divided up the garden into three parts, each took a part, and worked as we felt like it—each one digging up his own finds. Naturally, nothing was found. I made one strike, which the dials reported as metal of some kind at six feet down. I left it alone and went right on. No more metal, thanks!

Murchison, who had a bad tooth, located a retired English dentist at Cabourg and got it pulled; then domestic trouble arose to conclude an unfruitful week. Yvonne wanted to leave us; why? She liked us; she liked the job; she had no complaints; but people

were talking, and her folks were suspicious. The town was full of wild stories about these Americans who had brought a baby to beautiful Beaulieu —someone had seen us pushing a perambulator around.

If we had been keeping the house full of mistresses, nobody would have thought twice about it; but three bachelors and a baby got the French Mme. Grundy well het up! Gondy had to pull his title for all it was worth. Just then Buck showed up, and he had some influence. We got the mayor, two priests, two police agents and the postmaster together and showed them that the Baby was an electrical invention on which we were working; and after pulling a lot of corks, we were declared brave fellows and perfectly harmless, and Yvonne stayed on the job, much to our satisfaction.

BUCK reported no luck on his trip. He kept on trying to make Yvonne talk about her Nazi experiences, but she remained dumb. Then one afternoon he showed up with a litre bottle of the cheapest sort of peasant wine, and at sight of it she cooed with delight. He settled down in the kitchen with her. Murchison had gone to Cabourg to get his tooth-wound treated for infection. Gondy was running the Baby in the garden. I just loafed around and after a while came into the kitchen.

The bottle was half empty; Yvonne was giggling; Buck was jabbering at her, trying to get a spark of remembrance awake in her addled brain.

"A fine spectacle," I said. "I can imagine Parliament discussing it: A noble lord swigging *vin ordinaire* with a kitchen slavey! Gimme a shot."

He grinned and obeyed. The stuff was like vinegar.

"Carson, I'm positive that little gold cross belonged to Jeanne," he said. "Hers had a scratch where I tried to scratch my initials for her and could not. This one has the same scratch, 'pon my word!"

"More power to you," I said. "Feed her another slug of that poison."

He did so. Yvonne gulped it down, giggled again, and touched the cross at her neck.

"This got me safe home," she said. "Jeanne said it would, and it did."

The words hit Buck like an electric shock. But the glow faded from Yvonne's eyes. She did not even remember what she had just said. Jeanne? Never heard of any Jeanne.

"If we let her ramble under the influence of this rat-poison, we may learn something," I said. "No use trying to make her talk; she just gets confused and scared. You run down to the crossroads and get another bottle of the stuff."

"Then you'll not get any dinner," he said, with a critical glance at Yvonne.

"Get your information, and we'll dine at Deauville and make a night of it, in celebration. You should worry! This skirt is our grief, not yours. Better get two bottles."

He departed at speed in the Austin. I refilled Yvonne's glass.

Gondy came in, calling me. He had found something and could not be sure what it was, and wanted to know. I explained the situation and left him to entertain Yvonne and keep her thirsty.

Out in the garden, I investigated. Sure enough, Gondy had struck something. I studied the dials and gauges which registered the kickback of the radionic waves. We had worked out a regular chart which gave the reactions of various substances, but the present figures did not fit in.

The depth was easy; seven feet. But the substance buried there puzzled me. According to the reaction, it might be either wood or paper. The waves had a weakness in their rebound, suggesting that it lacked solidity. The area of the find, too, was surprising. By careful experiment, I set it down as seven by seven feet square. I came back to the kitchen, just as our friend Lord Arthur Buckleden popped in—not with two more litres of the acidulated red ink, but with three!

"Thought I'd best play it on the safe side," he said.

I discussed the find with Gondy. "As far as I can guess, old pal, a crate of wallboard might be buried there, flat side down."

He looked startled. "Or—canvas?"

I nodded. "Exactly. Or corpses. Or mine-wire or explosives. Or some other product of damned Kraut ingenuity. You go dig it; blessed if I will! I have bad dreams every time I think how we dug up those Teller mines. Consult Murch about it when he comes back; let him diagnose the Baby's reports for himself, and see."

When Murchison got back with the Fiat, however, he was doing no diagnosing or digging either; he was going to need a guardian for a day or two. That jaw of his had become infected, and the dentist had stuffed the wound full of sulfa; he was coming to repeat the operation tomorrow. Poor Murch, who was inclined to be flighty at best, would now be wandering around the empires of the moon sure enough; the only safe place for him while the sulfa worked was in bed. He agreed, dolefully, and Gondy took him off upstairs.

Yvonne was now steadily working her way through the second bottle of painkiller and blissfully enjoying it; in fact, she was prattling away nobly of this and that. Although any Norman peasant can handle enough *vin du pais* for a corporal's squad, she was getting very nicely lit up. Still, we got nowhere. Buck could sling the local patois, and I was trying Army French on her, and the only result was more giggles.

Then Gondy came back, and after listening a moment, brushed us off. He started in with his elegant Touraine French and put on his best *grand seigneur* manner; and Yvonne, her eyes bulging at him, reacted beautifully. At length he touched the cross and drew her attention to it.

"Oh, yes, m'sieur!" she said, with a hiccup. "Jeanne gave it to me when she got off the train. She said it would protect me, and the good God knows it did!"

Buck leaned forward, his eyes eager, but Gondy motioned him back.

"So she got off the train. At Rennes, I suppose?"

"Oh, no, m'sieur! That was at Aulain, after her face was so badly hurt. The Boches let her go. M. le Maire took care of her."

"A mayor? On the train?"

"Now, m'sieur, you make fun of me!" said Yvonne. "The Mayor of Aulain, naturally. *Zut, alors!* She dared to do that and spoil her pretty face, but I did not. What spirit, that Jeanne! And how terrible it was, with all of us crying—"

She began to boo-hoo in sympathy. Buck, his hand shaking, refilled her glass, and her tears were drowned. So, unhappily, was her recollection. We got not another word out of her, though we sat and pumped that arsenical red ink into her until the third bottle was gone and her back teeth must have been afloat. No soap. Finally she got sleepy, and we knew the session was over.

GONDY and I were now almost as interested in Buck's search as he was himself. After dumping Yvonne on her bed, the three of us took quick counsel.

"Aulain!" exclaimed Buck. "That's the other side of Rennes; I was there last week. A day's drive from here, the roads being what they now are. Well, we've discovered one thing! Jeanne never went to Germany! She got off the train. The mayor of the place took charge of her. But nothing in these parts has been heard of her since; and she was hurt, somehow. Apparently by intention."

His eyes flickered at us, one at me, one at Gondy. His voice died. His thought was only too clear. She was probably not alive now.

"I'll have to clear it up," he muttered. "Now we have a straight clue, at least."

"You're going to Aulain?" I asked.

"Of course."

"Too late in the day to get off now. Would your British hauteur take offense at the idea of a companion?"

Buck started slightly, then grinned. "Carson, I'd be tickled pink!"

"Fine. That leaves Gondy to look after Yvonne and Murch, and me to cook dinner. How does it stack up with M. le Vicomte?"

"Swell," said Gondy. He wanted to dig up Forain's cache of art, anyhow.

NEXT morning Yvonne was again as dumb as ever, and not only was unable to add anything to her story, but recalled none of it. So I crowded into the pint-sized Austin beside Buck, and away we went.

He had only one reference to Yvonne's story, just after we got off.

"You know Bill, Jeanne was a tremendously pretty girl. I suppose you did not miss the implication in Yvonne's words—that she had done something to her face. Probably to save herself from being put into an army brothel by those filthy Huns."

"I got it," I said; and he nodded. That closed the subject for us.

"Y' know, I've never regretted for an instant my commando work," he observed. "The idea that I was able to send some of those damned beasts out of this world has always made me happy—good deed and that sort of thing. . . . Have you a road map?"

"Hell, no," I said. "Do you need one?"

"Of course not," he said, chuckling. We did not refer to Jeanne again.

Except for the main pipe-lines to Paris, the French roads were very much out of kilter and would be for a long time, since there was little vehicular traffic to demand their repair. Consequently our jaunt across Normandy was not rapid, though Buck drove like a fiend when he could.

We got into Aulain late in the afternoon. It was a small town beside a stream, and carried no scars whatever of the war, though it was on the main railway line. We located the *mairie* and went in to find out who had been mayor about the time of D Day.

It was more of a trick than you would imagine. The Norman in his native habitat is a crabbed soul, and endures foreigners, meaning anyone outside his own district, only for the sake of their money. As for giving them information, that just goes against the grain. However, everyone had heard plenty about displaced persons; and when they learned it was a question of a D. P., we got some grudging replies. The mayor at that period had been an *avocat,* a distinguished gentleman of the village, whom we would now find at home enjoying his old age in leisure.

We located his home, and there located him. Did he remember the girl of whom he had taken charge, when she had been put off a train because of a hurt face? He did not. He did his best to brush us off completely. Threats on Buck's part got us nowhere. It was not until I went into the full story, told how Buck had been a paratrooper and so forth, and pulled all the stops on the romance involved, that the whiskered old rascal thawed a bit and remembered—vaguely.

The young woman, he said, had been treated by a local doctor, and had then been taken in charge by the brothers Dornay. These were descendants of the renowned poet of Rouen, of whom the whole world had heard; they had a farm some kilometers from town, and were substantial citizens. They had given the young woman a refuge at their farm; what had become of her after that, the *avocat* had no idea whatever. Only the brothers Dornay could tell.

By this time it was too late to pursue our search further. We got quarters for the night in the local hotel, and spent the evening making a tour of all the bistros in town. Buck wanted to get a line on the Dornay brothers, and got plenty. They had been leaders of the Resistance movement against the Nazis in this district; both were men over thirty; they lived with their families in a big double farmhouse, and they were good men to let alone.

Of Jeanne Duchesne, and whether she were alive or dead, Buck could learn nothing. He was drawn into a knot with suspense, that evening. In his phlegmatic English way he gave no hint of emotion, but he had the shakes and put away enough cognac to float a ship. I was alarmed for him, but in the morning he showed up clear-headed and cool. We got away in good time, and a little past nine sighted the Dornay farm.

It was a big, substantial place, marked by a rusting Mark IV tank which one of the brothers had himself knocked out during the war, and now placed here for a memento of the past. I took for granted that if Buck found his dame, they would throw their arms around each other and go into a clinch on the spot. That shows how dumb about it I really was.

The house was an old stone one shaped like the letter E, with the usual whopping manure-pile in place of the central bar. This was a Thursday, as it chanced—the weekly holiday in French schools. Quite a number of youngsters were playing around when we came, indicating that the Dornays had sizable families; they vanished, as we climbed out of the Austin, and two men approached us from the house.

The average Norman peasant is apt to be rough and tough, and independent as a hog on ice; obviously these Dornays ran true to form. The larger, who was the older brother Michel, was about my size, six foot two; he was solid and hairy, with huge rounded shoulders telling of tremendous strength, and his whiskers surrounded two vicious little eyes. The younger and smaller, Aristide, had a clean-shaven mug seamed with lines, none of them good ones, and looked like a bundle of steel wire. So he was, too.

They came to a halt, staring at us. Buck addressed them politely.

"We are seeking, messieurs, to speak with the brothers Dornay—"

The big fellow cut in on him, without a smile.

"Yes, we know all about it. You are a mad Englishman. You were a paratrooper. You have been sneaking about this district for weeks past. Well! I am Michel Dornay; this is my brother Aristide. We know how you were questioning people about us in town last night."

Buck was taken aback. "You're well informed, M. Dornay."

"Naturally." Michel scowled. "We do not like Englishmen. What do you want with us?"

"Information in regard to one Jeanne Duchesne."

"I understand that too," growled Michel. "I know of no such person."

"You brothers undertook to give her a refuge," said Buck. "Come, my friends! You did good work during the war; so did I. We're not the kind of men who need to lie and cheat one another. I'd be ashamed to lie to a comrade who helped me fight the Boche. So would you, eh? Let us talk like old soldiers."

It was a good approach, and for a moment I thought it would do the work. Then Aristide snarled something under his breath, and the big fellow drew himself up.

"Comrades? No accursed Englishman is a comrade of mine," he said savagely. "But I am no liar. The young woman you seek wants none of you, so clear out."

"Not on your word for it, my friend," said Buck. "If she says as much, well and good. I don't propose to clear out until I see her, and that's flat."

MICHEL doubled up his fists as though he could use them. This was an extreme gesture—your Frenchman will grab for a knife or pistol and think nothing of it, but any show of fists brings cries of horror from a crowd. I judged it was high time to intervene.

"Pardon me," I cut in. "Being American, not English, I cannot see any great sense in these proceedings, messieurs. My friend owes the lady a debt of gratitude and wishes to pay

it. Why should you stand between? What business is it of yours?"

"American? Yes, your tongue proves that," said Michel, turning to me. "Well, it is our business because we are her protectors. She does not wish to see this English milord; therefore it is settled. We have plenty of weapons in the house yonder, if you wish trouble."

"Then, being men of sense," I told him, "suppose you let her tell my friend her wishes. You admit she is here."

"No! We admit nothing," snapped Aristide. "You're on our property. Get off."

Buck laughed, and I knew what that laugh of his meant.

Michel spoke first, however.

"That is the truth," he said. "I am no liar. She is not here."

"I believe you," said Buck. "But you know where she's to be found."

"Certainly," assented the big fellow. "And I shall prevent you from troubling her. It is the truth, likewise, that she does not wish to see you or anyone else from her past life. She has said so."

BUCK was sweating, and his eyes were dangerous.

"Very well," I struck in anew. "My friend will write two words or perhaps three on his card, and give it to you. You will show it to Mlle. Duchesne. She will write either *'Yes'* or *'No'* on the card, and we shall be guided accordingly. We can return in a day or two for her answer, since we must push on to Rouen today. Eh?"

Michel's scowl cleared away. "Why not? Admirable! Americans have brains, certainly!"

"Give me the card. She shall have it when she—"

"You can take it to her," intervened Aristide, kicking Michel's ankle.

"Oh, of course!" assented Michel. "I'll take it to her myself."

Buck gave me an angry look, but complied; getting out a card and scribbling a few words, he handed it to Michel, then turned on his heel and went back to the car. I paused to shake hands with the brothers, merely as a gesture.

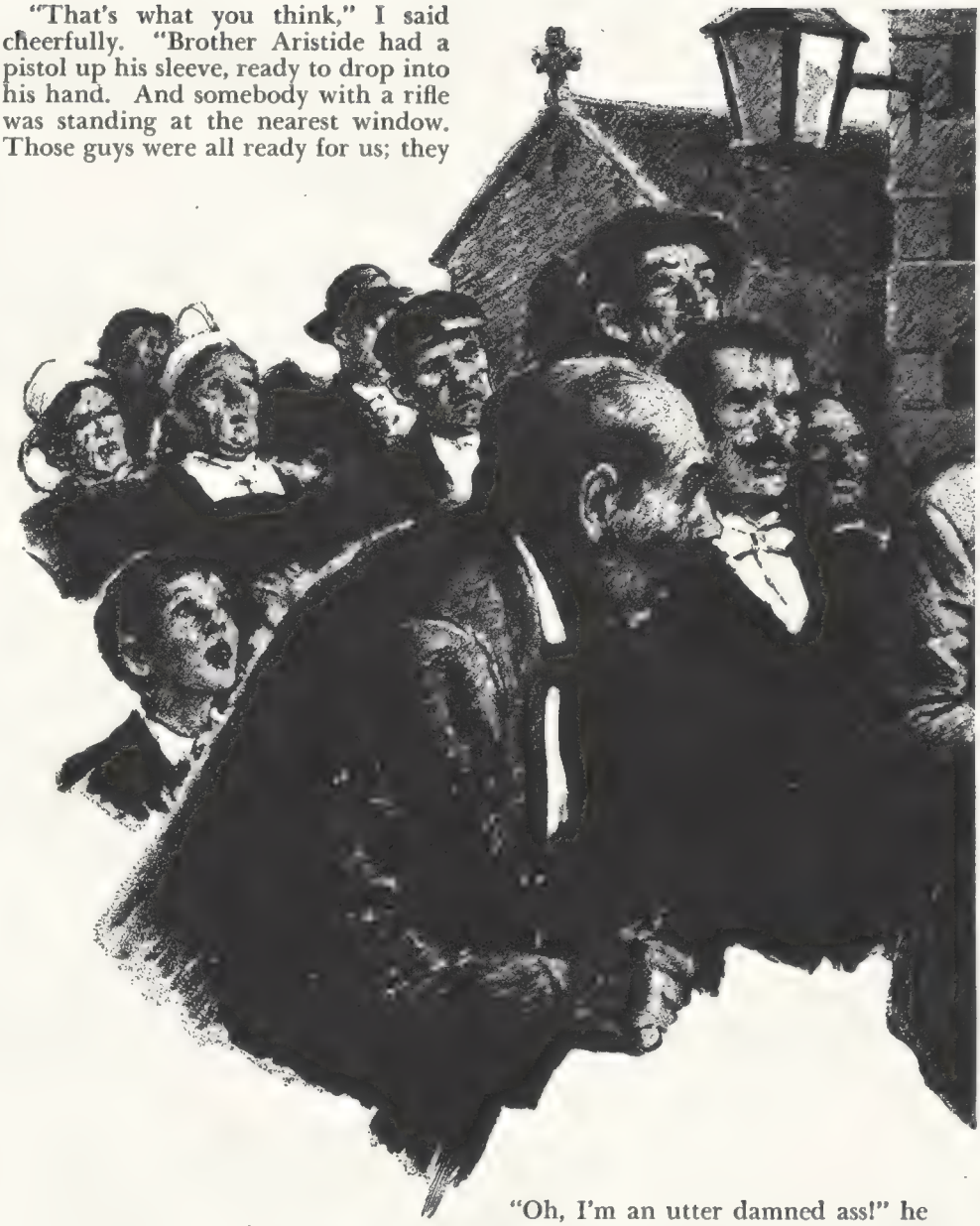
"Will you kindly direct us how to reach the Rouen highway from here?" I asked.

"Straight ahead on this road," said Aristide. "Five kilometers on, at the crossroads where the White Horse stands, take the turn to the left; that will put you on the highway."

I thanked them, joined Buck, and sent the Fiat rattling away. He swore viciously.

"Will you please explain this nonsense, Carson? In another thirty seconds I'd have taught those dunghill cocks the lesson they need."

"That's what you think," I said cheerfully. "Brother Aristide had a pistol up his sleeve, ready to drop into his hand. And somebody with a rifle was standing at the nearest window. Those guys were all ready for us; they had word last night from Aulain about our errand. Is that enough, or shall I continue?"



"If there's any more, let's have it, Yank," he said, losing his frown.

"Plenty! Michel spoke truth; she's not at the house—but she's returning. Why? I don't know, but I know how to find out. There's a tavern at the next crossroads; every other tavern in Normandy is named the Cheval Blanc. We'll stop there for an hour or two, and gossip and drink Calvados, and get some answers: Is that enough?"

"No, dammit," he said.

"Okay, then. We'll depart, presumably for Rouen, and we'll come back without any warning of our arrival preceding us—probably Sunday morning. These Normans are either good Catholics or rank Communists. Michel wore a cross or something around his neck. If he's a good Catholic, he'll be going to church. We'll find out where these people go to church. We'll go too. Your gal had a cross and made use of it, so she'll—"

"Oh, I'm an utter damned ass!" he broke out. "Carson, you've more brains in your little finger than I have in my whole carcass. Forgive me." Anxiety twisted him. "I'm on edge. I can't understand it. Why wouldn't she want me to find her?"

"I no savvy neither," I replied. "But they know you're an English milord, not just a cross— I mean," I caught myself up hurriedly, "not just a paratrooper named Wemyss."

"Cross-eyed paratrooper," he said, and hit me on the knee and grinned. "Oh, boy! You're all right. Carry on with the show and I'll be your batman, damn you for a smart Yankee! I don't deserve to black your boots, even." After a moment he added: "Y'know, I was afraid of that chap Aristide. The smaller they are, the more dangerous. If we have a mess with those lads, you take Michel. He's your size."

"Agreed," I told him. "Being one of these commando killers, you can probably look after your own small self better than I can. But if you

Illustrated by Maurice Bower

"My children, you must explain all this to me," the old priest said quietly. "Monsieur, who are you, if you please?"

tangle with Aristide, you'll need everything you've got, milord. And at the White Horse, keep your trap shut; don't let 'em know you're a Britisher. We don't want to start another war. We want information."

Buck grinned all over and clapped me again on the knee. He certainly was a right guy.

WE got to the White Horse—at one side of the crossroads with a little stone church at the other, and a blacksmith shop between. We went into the tavern and I planted Buck solicitously in one corner with a bottle of apple brandy; then I circulated among the half dozen farmers who were liquidating the noonday heat. I spoke of my sick friend and of how I was an American writing a book and needed to learn about a few of the old customs of Normandy, and they ate it up.

As soon as we got to clinking glasses, I knew all was well; that is a Norman custom only when the guy is okay. When I began to make notes, everyone laughed and pitched in to fatten my pile. We ate bread and cheese and sent some to Buck, and kept on talking. A word here, an allusion there, and I got what I most wanted to know. The church had a long name I never did understand, but the country for miles around worshiped here, even the school-teacher. What school-teacher? I asked, with sudden premonition.

"Oh, La Balafré," began one, when another cut him off and said something in patois, about the war; whereat he looked sheepish and said no more.

We had another drink; then I remembered my sick friend and after a handshake all around, went back to him. In another five minutes Buck and I were heading north.

"All the luck in the world, Buck!" I told him. "She's known hereabouts as La Balafré, or the Scarred Lady; it's a name of respect, and connected with the war—easy enough to guess what. Also, she teaches the country school somewhere around here. Also the mass usually attended by everyone at the church behind us is at eight o'clock."

Buck groaned. "Must we wait till Sunday?" he pleaded.

"If I'm running the show, yes. That's our best chance to escape being murdered by the Dornay gang. Look, my noble friend! The Dornays happen to be church members in high standing. Most of their crowd belong to the Communist wing, and you can bet will not be found at the crossroads church."

"I see. You're right again," he admitted. "I suppose you've figured everything out to the last detail, General Ike."

"Penultimate detail," I corrected him. "We be at the church at seven-thirty if not earlier. The Dornay party have some little distance to come and will probably arrive at the last

minute. We want to be back in the last dark corner when they walk in, so we can catch our party when they leave. I expect we can look for plenty trouble, but hardly for shooting—not around a church. Satisfied?"

"No, but I will be," he said, and his face cleared. "This is Thursday: What do we do meantime?"

"Go back home, roundabout—Trouville-Deauville tonight, hit the tables, drown our sorrows, fight off the sparrows from Paris, and drift home early in the morning or after breakfast, and stay there until Saturday evening, when we start out and drive all night in order to get to church early. We'll come in the Fiat, not in this bus."

"Why the Fiat?" he asked.

"More room. You don't suppose Gondy and Murch are going to let us run off to battle by ourselves, do you? Also, it won't be recognized as yours."

We hauled out a road-map and worked around to Deauville in time for the evening's fun. The Monte Carlo evening-attire restrictions did not pertain here, most of the Normandy casinos being a bit on the cheap side, so we made a night of it.

I stuck to the galloping bones, and all they did was lead me in a funeral march. But not Buck. He headed for the baccarat rooms. He had plenty of coin, was furiously reckless whether he won or lost, and was down on the world generally; consequently, after I lost my shirt I looked him up and found him sitting in a regular foxhole of thousand-franc notes, and more rolling in fast.

Some English nobility were on hand, and they knew him. The Greek and French plungers said he had the evil eye, on account of his cast, and had lost their nerve. He just took everybody in sight. He gave bales of banknotes to every *cocotte* who tipped him the eye, ordered champagne like a lord, and about four in the morning the manager came around with tears in his whiskers to say the bank was broke.

Buck introduced me to a couple of dukes who were cadging drinks; then we loaded the loot into the Austin and drove down the coast highway and got home about dawn. We sneaked in and went to bed, leaving three or four hundred thousand francs out in the seat of the Austin, and did not wake up until the middle of the afternoon.

EVEN then Buck refused to be wakened; he still had another day to kill, he said. I bathed, shaved, dressed and found Gondy slaving away in the garden while Murchison lolled in a beach chair at the edge of the hole and encouraged him. Poor Gondy was done up, and had not yet reached the cache, whatever it was.

We had a pleasant reunion. Murchison's tooth was now in good shape and he had recovered from his sulfa spree, but he would not touch a spade.

"No thanks, boys," he said. "I'll fill in the hole afterward, but I've had my fill of mines and corpses. Come on with the yarn, Bill Carson! Did Buck find his dame?"

I felt sorry for Gondy; vicomtes are not brought up to spade work. After we had talked over my story, Gondy and Murchison agreed we must all go along with Buck. Then Yvonne came and tied up Gondy's blistered hands and I took over the spade. As a matter of fact, he had almost reached the cache.

With careful approach, I reached it and started to dig around it, having established that it was nothing worse than another packing-case. It was only a foot deep, but seven feet on each side, as I had previously discovered—and that meant a lot of digging. Sunset came and brought Buck to join us, and I had only uncovered half the damned thing.

"You Yanks are brilliant guys," said Buck critically. "Scientists or something, aren't you?"

"What the hell's on your Yorkshire-pudding mind?" I demanded ungraciously.

He grinned. "Why don't you open the exposed end, pull out what's inside, and leave the container buried?" he asked.

We looked at one another; it was the obvious thing, naturally.

"That's exactly what we propose to do," I replied. "But with darkness coming on, we'll wait till morning, thanks. Might be a couple guys inside that got run over and pressed flat by a tank. Anything's possible in this little garden of paradise."

"More truth than poetry in that," said Gondy, and we quit.

Buck tossed all his bales of thousand-franc notes into the back of the Austin, intimating that if everything went well, it would go for honeymoon expenses, and if things went wrong, what the hell did anything matter? Gondy, with whom I canvassed the business, privately, regarded it as serious in the extreme.

"The girl Jeanne probably slashed or damaged her face and is permanently scarred," he said. "Among her own people it would be regarded as a proud badge; not so elsewhere. And if she has discovered that this man is a British milord, you can see why she would never want him to see her again."

"Maybe you can, but I can't," I told him. "If she fell in love with him—"

"That's the very reason, Bill! You've never been in love and—"

"I've been in love a dozen times," I said indignantly.

Gondy sighed. "Sure. Your kind of love. This is the real thing, if it exists at all."

I gave up. He was incurably romantic and nobody can savvy a romantic Frenchman. . . .

In the morning, we attacked the exposed end of the packing-case and tore it apart. From it we extracted picture after picture—we had struck Forain's cache and no mistake this time! Some were little ones, some large. Some were framed, most were not. Gondy had a partial list of the stolen pictures, and they checked up. Most were old pictures and some were scandalous. We stacked them all in the house; it was Gondy's job to contact the Paris dealers and get the reward. Murchison and I filled in the hole and then packed up the Baby.

Buck did not even take a look at them. He was busy showing himself off around town and was tight with nervous tension again.

A LITTLE after seven next morning, Sunday, we parked the Fiat outside that White Horse crossroads and filed into the church. Activities were under way already—farmers, old women in white lace caps, and younger folks filtering in and out, but no sign of our party. We got a back seat and had a hard time keeping awake; then just as the candles were being lighted, in came the Dornay delegation.

Big Michel marched in, Aristide at his heels, both of them dolled up in their Sunday clothes; then came the women and children, and they were certainly a swarm to behold. We had eyes for only one of them, however, a slender, pale girl in white. As she went past, we could see only the left side of her face, and we knew then, or I did, why Buck was in love. She was not just pretty; she was an angel. She had everything: serene dignity, pride, a brave tenderness. No, not everything either—she was not happy. When she got down on her knees and hid her face in her hands, she was absorbed in earnest prayer to the exclusion of everything else.

Then, when everyone stood up, we could see the right side of her face. I stole a glance at Buck and looked away quickly; his own face was a study in emotions. No wonder. The right side of that girl's face was a red, poorly healed scar—a bad one. In America, she would have worn a heavy veil, but not here, of course. In France, such things are not hidden; they are met and conquered, because everyone knows about them.

All through the service, we had to sit there looking at that poor scarred half-face of hers. The minute it was over, we scrambled to get out among the first, and Murchison, at my shoulder, gave me a murmured word.

"What's our play, Bill?"

"Interference," I said. "If it gets messy, I'll take on that big fellow, Michel."

They came streaming out. We waited at the gate of the churchyard. Michel and Aristide came out. They saw us, exchanged a startled word, stared at us, then came forward. Aristide gave Buck a nod.

"Here is the card for you, monsieur," he said, and extended the card.

Buck took it, tore it in two, and started forward as Jeanne Duchesne appeared.

"Get out of the way," he said. Aristide blocked him.

"Impossible, Englishman. You have had her reply; we cannot permit—"

Something happened to Aristide right there. He did land one crack that brought blood to Buck's face—then he learned about commando tactics. Buck actually moved too fast to follow; I just heard Aristide groan, saw him collapse, saw Buck throw him aside like a sack of meal—and then Michel was moving in on Buck. I stepped between.

For a while that was about the liveliest churchyard in all France. Women screamed. Buck was approaching Jeanne, who stood like a white statue staring at him, I had my hands full and Murchison and Gondy stood fending off the buzzing farmers—the fact that Gondy was a Frenchman, gave them pause.

Nothing gave *me* pause. Michel was doing his best to paralyze me. I am not one of these clever guys who can knock out a bruiser with a mere jerk of the finger. The only way I could handle big Michel was to hit him under the belt, and I did it—without effect. I had to keep on doing it, and did. After taking what would have settled half a dozen ordinary mortals, he folded.

Right then, the crowd started moving in on us from all directions—only to come to a dead halt. The priest appeared, an old, white-haired man, and with a word he stopped everything. Next instant he stopped too, as Buck stood in front of Jeanne. What they said was public property, but they did not care.

"Jeanne Duchesne?" said Buck. "Are you Jeanne?"

"Of course, monsieur," she responded coldly. "Can't you see?"

"No," he said, with a vague gesture. "My eyes, you know—not so far away. Come closer. I must see you, Jeanne."

He was only a foot away, but he craned closer, until he was almost touching her, puckering up his face and staring. Then he put out his hand to hers, and smiled.

"Oh! You are, you are!" he exclaimed. "Jeanne, my dear! I told you that I'd come back and find you—"

If he gave her a shock that left her white and gasping, you can imagine what he did to us. Murchison spoke at my ear.

"The damned little lying bastard! Bill, he's a right guy, huh?"

Jeanne put out a hand and touched his face.

"Oh, my dear!" she exclaimed. "Do you mean—your eyes—"

"A shell," he said, and laughed. "Never mind. It's nothing. They say it may get better some day. Let me look at you, Jeanne! I've found you, I've found you!"

She stiffened. "Yes, look at me," she said, and turned the right side of her face to him. "Look well at me, and you'll see why you must not be foolish. You must go back to England and not think of me any more, monsieur. It would be very wrong."

Buck just laughed. "Why? You look splendid, Jeanne! More in love than ever."

"This scar!" she shot at him.

"What scar?" He peered again at her and shook his head, mystified. "I don't know what you're talking about. There isn't any scar that I can see. You mean that little red mark near your mouth? No, that isn't a scar."

I saw her begin to tremble. She drew back, incredulous. But just then the old priest moved in between them, put out a hand to each, and spoke upon a dead, strained silence.

"My children, you must explain all this to me," he said quietly. "Monsieur, who are you, if you please?"

BUCK looked at him—no, looked past him, I noticed.

"I was a paratrooper," he said. "I landed behind the German lines on D Day and was injured. Jeanne found me and took care of me, nursed me, finally got me back to my own people. We were in love; I promised to return. And I did, but I've been unable to find Jeanne. My friends have to see for me, you understand. Now we must find a priest at once and get married and go to England—or around the world. Why not? Where can we find a priest, monsieur?"

"I am a priest, my son," said the old man.

Big Michel stirred. He was holding his belly and listening, with an expression of painful amazement. I held down a hand to him and he got to his feet, staring at the scene.

"Oh, you are! Good!" exclaimed Buck. "Listen, Father: She has been saying something about a scar. I do not understand at all. I cannot see what difference it makes if my face is a little bit scarred, do you?"

The old man looked at him, then looked at Jeanne.

"I certainly do not, my son," he replied. But abruptly Jeanne caught his arm and burst into a passionate storm of dialect which I could scarcely follow at all—about Buck being a great man in England, and how shameful it would be if she married him, I gathered; tears were streaming on her cheeks as she spoke. The old man put his arm about her shoulders and made a gesture to the rest of us not to interrupt.

"Dear child Jeanne," he said, "this man loves you and needs your care. Do you not comprehend what he says? He cannot see any scar. Is there any reason why you should not be married—do you not love him?"

He held her against him, her face against his soutane, and we could not hear her reply; but there was no need. Big Michel reached out and grabbed my shoulder.

"By God, monsieur, your friend is a gallant gentleman!" he growled.

I am not certain of what happened next; Buck had Jeanne in his arms, and the priest was telling them that he could make some sort of wartime dispensation and marry them on the spot, and they could arrange the civil formalities later, and the whole crowd began talking at once, with a voluble chatter that would have drowned out a barrage. The main point was that Jeanne was kissing Buck, and he was kissing her scarred cheek. The old priest must have suspected something, because he left them and came striding over to us.

"You are the friends of this gentleman?" he said.

Gondy answered for us, and gave his name and title, and shook hands.

"Ah! Tell me, M. de Gondy," said the priest, eyeing him keenly, "is this Englishman really blind? I may be mistaken, but I seem to recollect having seen such a man recently, driving a small car. I cannot afford to make mistakes in this affair."

Gondy looked at us, then back at the priest, and swallowed hard.

"Upon my honor as a gentleman, *mon père,*" he said, with his grand bow, "I can assure you there is no mistake; it is precisely as Lord Buckleden says. Ultimately, I believe, there is some hope that his sight may be restored—as," he added softly, "there is every hope that plastic surgery will remove the scar in question."

The old priest looked at him for a moment, then his eyes twinkled. He made a gesture to everyone, went back to Jeanne and Buck, and walked them straight back into the church. We all followed.

You can understand, probably, why Murchison and I thought the world of the Vicomte de Gondy.

"Viking Treasure," in our next issue, takes our adventurers with their mine-detector on a strange quest in England.

A Captain Must Know Men

The education of a callow mate leads to strange events —and the sinful confess themselves guilty of honesty.

by RICHARD HOWELLS WATKINS

Illustrated by Cleveland Woodward

PATRICK CRAIG, mate of the *Kate Dever*, carefully screwed up his leathery and grizzled face into an expression of the utmost malignance.

His outraged eyes had seen a man stealthily entering the sacred office of Captain Bartlett, just under the chartroom. Even worse, the intruder was that redheaded turtle-hunter Tomas, picked up yesterday in an oarless boat drifting off Los Roques.

Pat Craig tried not to think how Captain Bartlett would take this. All misdoings on the *Kate* came to roost on Pat's shoulders.

He darted a glance at the mountains of Venezuela rising up ahead, and made out the cathedral spire below. He was due at his post on the forecastle head. Captain Bartlett had already climbed to the bridge to take her into the roadstead through the clutter of native fishing craft.

Pat Craig beckoned to Angus Slattery, a redheaded quartermaster.

"Into the thwartship passage with ye!" he said softly. "That Tomas has sneaked into the Old Man's office. Block the inside door, while I come in from the deck."

Angus Slattery opened his mouth.

"Shut up!" commanded Pat Craig in a fierce whisper. "I've told ye before! Don't talk! Obey! That loose mouth leads ye around by the scruff o' your neck. Move!"

Angus started his long and erratic body. Waiting to let him get into position, Pat worked up the ferocity of his visage again. Contortions of the face had helped Pat get through life.

Pat had a tender conscience—a devil of a conscience—a conscience as handy as three noses to the mate of a merchant ship. Always he found it hard to be hard; he understood men too well.

Right now he felt he had a right to be angry. The rescue of Tomas the day before had delayed the ship and pinched his own thumb in the block of the lifeboat fall, thereby upsetting his dignity and the efficiency of the launching.

The only thing Mr. Craig didn't hold against Tomas Obregon was that his hair was red. There was always some good in a man whose hair was red. That applied to gawky young Angus Slattery too; at least Pat kept hoping it did.

"There I was," said Angus,

"between the Old Man's office and this killer; there wasn't another officer I'd trust to back me up."

HE rubbed knuckles against knuckles forebodingly, approached the door of the Old Man's office and flung it open.

Tomas was standing in front of the safe; he was about to light one of the Old Man's own stogies.

Startled, Tomas darted a placating smile at Pat Craig. His soft brown eyes asked pardon for this intrusion. The expression on Pat's face changed his tactics abruptly. He spun around and darted out the other door. Angus' knobby wrists and clutching hands met him. Tomas writhed sinuously by and ran out on deck.

Angus pursued, bellowing.

"Bog-trotter!" Pat Craig muttered. He followed with dignity; then he froze as his widening eyes saw Tomas' lithe body hurtling over the rail into the sea.

"Man overboard!" somebody shouted. The bridge crackled with the Old Man's commands. Pat loped for the starboard lifeboat. The *Kate Dever,* wheel hard over, began a long swing around. Overboard, poor devil! Pat's conscience had him in a full nelson.

There were more easily maneuverable craft close by. One local schooner, paintless, with patched sails and dubious running rigging, came about dexterously and headed for the swimming man.

She was near Tomas, flying along under the urge of the tradewind, when he flung up his arms and sank. With sails flogging, the schooner lost way. Her crew looked eagerly for the swimmer, and Pat Craig breathed a prayer.

The schooner's men dashed about the decks, peering fruitlessly overside. At last the man at the wheel turned his hands palm upward toward the steamer and hunched his shoulders. The schooner got under way again.

"Lower away, Mr. Craig," Captain Bartlett instructed. His bushy brows dropped low over his eyes in annoyance. He pointed his pince-nez glasses like a scepter, at the boat. "The man was a Venezuelan. We don't want any trouble. What started this?"

Mr. Craig opened his mouth to explain, but Angus Slattery committed the unforgivable sin of addressing the Captain.

"He was in your office, sir, about to rob your safe," he said. "When he saw me, he ran." Coyly he shuffled a modest foot. "I must have scared him, sir."

"I did not speak to this man, Mr. Craig!" the Captain thundered. His eyes blazed censure as he leveled his glasses at Pat. He took a quick step forward and lowered his formidable voice below the hearing of any of the crew:

"You will explain your odd disciplining methods to me in private, Mr. Craig. Further, I do not like thieves in my office."

"Ar!" said Pat, looking at Angus. He made no other comment; he had a boat to get away. He was upset, too, about Tomas' drowning. The man had had red hair and a pleasing grin. And that name—Tomas Obregon! Had there been a Thomas O'Brien somewhere in his family's past?

He sweated under the overhead sun while a grumbling boat's crew pulled over the choppy blue seas. Tomas was gone, but Angus Slattery—and his mouth—remained firmly on Pat's chest.

Only in Angus' ancestry was there hope for the irresponsible gawk. His

Angus Slattery would not take a useful lesson tamely. He lunged and charged, his fists whirling in a macabre dance.

mother was Highland Scottish and his father south-of-Ireland. In the case of Patrick Craig, his father was of Highland blood, his mother a McGonigle from Cork. Manifestly that was a better arrangement. But even so, in Pat's judgment, which had worked in the past, Angus ought to be good officer material, barring his mouth.

"IF his mouth *could* be barred," Pat added, with his eyes sweeping the white crests. "Put your back into it, men! It's rowing, not fanning yourselves, ye are. Pull a bit!"

Over a year's time, by dint of firmness and some shouting, Pat Craig had coached Angus and eventually steered him through the examination for a third mate's ticket. But where would he find an officer's berth for Angus? Even with war on and officers needed, masters and employment managers sheered away from Angus' youthful ebullience and hair-trigger tongue.

"I can still feel the way the Old Man's eyes jabbed me when I said I could use Angus as acting fourth mate," he thought.

Captain Bartlett was important. He wasn't far from becoming marine super of the line. "But the old goat doesn't throw up his hat an' cheer about anybody, even me," Pat meditated, thinking of the Old Man's furry, prehensile and expressive eyebrows.

After a scrupulous two hours' search, Captain Bartlett signaled the boat to quit. The *Kate Dever* proceeded to port.

Pat Craig jumped into the routine of getting the wheat flour out of Number Four and the cased stuff out of Number Two 'tween-decks and ironing out differences between the second mate and the chief stevie. It was a tough day for a man who had taken the bridge at four A.M., but nothing at all compared to the twenty minutes he spent in the Old Man's office just before supper. Bartlett used Angus' flexible tongue as a whip for Pat.

After that the mate was too exhausted to be more than mildly pleased at getting ashore on a bit of ship's business that evening. He got it done; then, steaming gently in the subsiding heat, he strolled along the waterfront toward El Frio Conejo for a quick one.

He was startled to discover that since last voyage the Cold Rabbit—a dockside tavern fashioned from the hulk of an old sailing-ship with the butt of the mainmast showing as an ornate Corinthian pillar—had acquired two señoritas with mandolins. The prettier of these was strumming softly as she listened with a Mona Lisa smile to a man in the group of seamen around her. Pat's weary eyes popped open.

Yes, that was Angus Slattery, talking to her—an older, more devil-may-care and authoritative Angus Slattery than the awkward oaf who stood a wheel trick on the *Kate*.

Pat Craig's countenance again began screwing up.

"There I was," said Angus Slattery, with a dashing gesture, "between the door of the Old Man's office and this killer who'd schemed himself on board to rob the Old Man's safe. He had his hands on a couple of thousand bucks that had been stowed in the upper left compartment of the safe—the ship's money. But when I stepped in he dropped the cash, to pull a knife and gun on me.

"There I was," repeated Angus Slattery, rolling an eye toward the brown-eyed *mandolinista*, "and the worst of it was I knew there wasn't another officer—did I say I was chief mate in her?—that I'd trust to back me up. Not one! I was alone, Dolores and—"

A glint of red hair under the down-turned Panama of a man slumped low at a side table oddly distracted Pat Craig's burning eyes. He looked and made a queer sound in his throat. There was no doubt; there, discreetly remote, sat either the drowned ghost or the live person of Tomas Obregon. A brown paper cigarette glowed in one corner of his mouth and an amiable smile curled up the other.

Pat's involuntary swallowing of his tonsils drew Tomas' alert eye. He started bolt upright; his chair scraped on the flagstones of the patio.

Angus' gaze was drawn from Dolores by this abrupt movement. He saw Tomas and let go a roar:

"*There* he is!"

Angus plunged through his audience toward Tomas. Nimbly Tomas started toward the door.

"Pardon, señor!" Tomas murmured, as he sped past Pat Craig. His teeth flashed brilliantly, inviting Pat's mirth. Pat made no attempt to stop him. He was folding his arms portentously, his crumpled countenance turned toward Angus Slattery.

Angus saw Pat; he faltered, sidestepped, then mended his pace—even faster, he pursued Tomas into the street.

Pat Craig looked at his watch. In twenty minutes, as Pat well knew, Angus was due on duty at the gangway of the *Kate Dever*. If the quartermaster were wise he would ignore Tomas and make haste.

Pat ordered his drink and brooded over it. So Angus was mate of the *Kate*, was he? Not another officer in her whom he'd trust to back him up! Pat saw nothing in the charms of the mandolining señorita to justify Angus in shooting such a breeze as that.

"He's had discipline; he needs more than that to cure him," Pat Craig muttered to his rum and fizz. "He needs a shock. Ninety-eight per cent mouth, that young squirt!"

STILL brooding, Pat became aware that somebody had strolled in toward Tomas' modest table and picked up his glass. He looked up. It was Tomas, as cool as his drink. . . . Well, after all, Tomas had stolen only Captain Bartlett's stogie. Nothing else could be proven. With his two hands Tomas made an explanatory gesture to the brown-eyed lady of the mandolin. Her teeth sparkled back at him. Life, Tomas was indicating, was strange, wonderful and enjoyable in spite of odd moments. The girl seemed to understand—and so, vaguely, did Pat Craig.

Tomas glanced at Pat, smiled again and approached his table tentatively, bringing along his drink.

"What promotions, señor!" Tomas said in English. "From helmsman

"Captain Bartlett seemed to know this pistol," Tomas said. "It is not too ordinary, this one."

the young man ascends to chief mate, within a day."

Pat Craig grunted. For the glory of the *Kate* he should at least kick Tomas. But his feet were tired.

"How'd you get out of the sea?" Pat asked.

Again Tomas flashed his teeth; his red hair gleamed, too.

"I had friends on that schooner. They helped me slip aboard on the side away from your ship. I am of this place."

THIS man was a rascal. *Arrastracueros* was the mouth-comforting Venezuelan word to condemn him. But perhaps even rascals, Pat thought, have uses. He jerked a hand toward a chair. Tomas slid into it with a nod and set his drink on the table.

"I am hoping my curious wanderings in your ship are excused by the passage of a little time, señor," he said.

"You're no turtle-hunter," said Pat.

"I am many things, including being rumba teacher for seven terrible months in Bronx dance-hall," said Tomas, and shuddered. "I have been mechanic, machinist, fisherman, pearl-diver, *ranchero*—"

"And ye think Angus Slattery is a joke?" Pat observed.

"No!" said Tomas. "Just young, a disease unhappily curable too soon. Also overgiven to talk."

"Talk!" Pat Craig agreed, nodding gloomily. "Without the slightest concern for the consequences of it."

He brooded and Tomas respected this mood by silence.

An idea, like a swirl of steam from the funnel, whisked up out of Pat's black stew of melancholy. Suddenly, on this beautiful night, he felt a reformer's power and urge.

"You have friends and perhaps could use a few bolivars," he said, glancing at Tomas' wrinkled clothes.

Tomas leaned forward, no longer the café idler, but a man of business. His eyes were alert.

"I have in mind to make plain to Slattery that the tongue is a deadly weapon," Pat Craig said. "Suppose ye were to send a man to the gangway of the *Kate Dever* in an hour's time with a note for *el señor* mate. Slattery will be on duty. He wouldn't be able to read it, but the scent on it would give him a clue." He jerked his head toward the mandolin girls.

"I well understand," said Tomas.

"When Slattery followed the man to the jetty, you and your friends would close in and give him a little going-over." He scowled at Tomas. "I don't want the boy hurt, understand! I want him to learn that throwing his voice around can cause —well, call it an echo with the kick of a mule."

"I would be willing to throw a knife past his—"

Pat frowned at this too-obliging man. "No!" he said. "Though it is well scared I want him to be." He screwed up his face in thought. "I might join the gang of *los mugs* myself and put a couple of shots in the air with my gun."

"That would be the way, señor." Understandingly Tomas added: "And your presence would stop blood from growing too hot among my companions during the roughness."

"Yes," said Pat. "I ought to be close by. Afterward I could show up to put a word in his ear while it was stinging."

He pointed a finger at Tomas.

"Rig a fast getaway for yourself! Guards walk the jetty, and Slattery'll tell the cops to look for you. Though I may cure him of irresponsibility, he'll not be grateful to you."

"I will be gone like the night," agreed Tomas.

LUSTILY, the mugs were earning their bolivars.

A ready man with the mouth is not always as active with his fists. But this plainly did not apply to Angus Slattery. He would not take a useful lesson tamely. Amidst piled cargo and columns supporting the jetty roof, he lunged and charged among

his assailants, fists whirling in a macabre dance through the darkness.

With a hot handkerchief masking his face, Pat Craig crouched beside a stack of cased stuff. He saw with dismay the ease with which Angus spun a couple of attackers away from him. Still far from having been educated, Angus broke into the clear for a run back to the ship's gangway.

Pat jumped out to head him off. He jerked up his gun. He had pried the lead slugs out of the cartridges before sneaking ashore again, so he had no fear of doing any damage. Swiftly he got off three shots, low over Angus' head. Angus recoiled.

Tomas' bravos, game enough even if small beside the quartermaster, closed in behind. Angus ducked and charged Pat. His long arm, swinging with awkward power, hit the gun squarely. It flew from Pat's grasp.

A mighty roar came from the landward end of the pier. Captain Bartlett came puffing up toward the fray. Somebody on the *Kate's* bridge turned a searchlight on the scrimmage.

Pat was circling the combatants to stretch down an arm and catch up his fallen gun from among their writhing legs. He felt himself illumined and jerked his masked head down into his body in an unsuccessful imitation of a turtle. He jumped back toward the cover of the piled cargo.

Captain Bartlett spotted the revolver almost at his feet; he grabbed it and stared at it with a marksman's quick appraisal. He had seen it before.

Pat shuddered. Icicles bedecked his backbone. He started out of concealment.

Tomas kicked the shipmaster violently in the appropriate place. He snatched the pistol from the astounded Captain, and cut between Pat Craig and the searchlight. He pushed Pat back toward the shadow of the cased stuff.

"Is that you, Mr. Craig?" Bartlett bawled—but his voice was uncertain. "Who is that? Stop, you ruffians! All hands!"

One of the panting attackers managed to contact Angus' solid jaw with his elbow. It was a peculiar blow, doubly effective. The owner of the elbow howled in anguish. Angus dropped, out cold.

"Run—or you are recognized!" Tomas muttered to Pat Craig. "Run—across the jetty! I have your gun."

Pat knew the inside of a box when he saw it. The Old Man wouldn't take a kick, or even a riot, lightly!

Pier guards were coming, emitting frightening cries to soften up this mysterious *bochinche*. A knot of men was forming on the *Kate's* deck to sally down the gangplank. The Old Man was plunging against the restraining arms of Tomas' friends. Never was a time more propitious for scramming. Pat scrammed.

A rope ladder was slung over the sea wall that protected the east side of the jetty from the tradewinds. Down the yielding strands of the ladder Pat dropped, onto men in the boat below. Other men pounded down on him, close as links in a chain, with Tomas last.

Four men at the oars gave way at Tomas' muttered command, and the boat surged clumsily out into the dark roadstead. She was screened by a jetty wall from the *Kate's* light.

Pat breathed more freely. Angus had been taught at least a bit of a lesson. Pat doubted if anyone had recognized him.

"Put me ashore," he said. "I'll come strolling up the pier from town, innocent as a set of quintuplets."

"It is too dangerous to try a landing yet, señor," Tomas said. "We will lose ourselves in the roadstead and take refuge on the schooner that picked me up this afternoon."

Pat Craig grunted. This was sense, but he felt a twinge of uncertainty. Tomas spoke softly. The rowboat swung toward dim running lights farther from the coast. The schooner, with motor muttering softly, loomed up in the dark.

They drew alongside and scrambled aboard. On the quarterdeck Tomas let go a low volley of orders. Pat stared at his redheaded confederate. He knew that tone: Tomas was master of this schooner!

"Come below," said Tomas, and led the way down the companion ladder. Pat followed slowly. He knew motives had shifted. The teaching of Angus no longer gripped Tomas Obregon's mind.

They sat across the table from each other. Pat was wary of his smiling host. The schooner got under way.

Tomas poured a drink. *"Cana,"* he said and pushed it across the table to Pat. He pulled out Pat's gun. His slender fingers turned it over slowly, examining it.

"Captain Bartlett seemed to know this pistol," Tomas said. "It is not too ordinary, this one."

He put it on the table.

"Señor mate," he said, "I do not wish to be offensive—but frankly, you are in my pocket."

Pat Craig sat up stiffly and ignored the drink.

"Ye say so."

"Consider," Tomas said. "If he finds you out, will your captain forgive you this attack on his ship's men, this affront to his own dignity?"

"What d'ye want?" Pat asked.

"I trust you, señor," Tomas said, leaning closer. "In a few moments you are to be landed safely. You return to your ship, as sinless as five *niños*."

"I asked, what d'ye want?" Pat Craig said.

"If proof of your innocence is needed, the owner of El Frio Conejo will speak willingly—for me," Tomas said. "He will tell how you explained to him on the roof of his *taberna* what stars and planets a navigator uses in finding his position in tropic waters."

Pat rubbed his knuckles together on the table.

"You have guessed that this is my schooner," Tomas went on appealingly. "As a seaman you will know what devilish numbers of bolivars are needed by a poor master to keep his ship in sails, paint, cordage, gasoline, motor repairs and hauling-out to rid the bottom of accursed sea-worms with copper paint."

"I have the fifty bolivars our bargain calls for, and maybe another ten or fifteen on me," Pat said curtly.

Tomas stood up. "Please!" he said. "You are free to go. My services in the reforming of the young Señor Slattery are unworthy of payment."

Pat Craig got to his feet too; he felt that this time he had trusted red hair too far. He eyed Tomas.

Tomas smiled. "But what I hope, señor, is that at three this morning there will be a little rope hanging over the outboard side of your ship amidships. I hope, too, that your harbor watch is vigilant only in watching the jetty. I hope that no doors are locked between me and the Captain's office on the bridge. I think I am mechanic enough to deal quietly with that safe."

He put a persuasive hand on Pat's scandalized arm.

"There will be none of my crew in the morning confessing to Captain Bartlett his guilt—and yours—in the attack on Señor Slattery."

His fingers played with the gun on the table. "Nor will your pistol be put in Bartlett's hand as proof," he added.

"Be damned to you for a scoundrel!" Pat Craig blazed, wrenching his arm away from the man. His eyes licked at the gun. Too far away for a quick grab! "Ye'd have me connive in the robbing of my own ship, would ye? Well, the answer's 'No!'"

The pulse of the schooner's motor was slowing. Tomas, unruffled, waved a hand toward the companionway. "We are close to shore now," he said. "You wish to go, señor?"

Impulsively he caught up the pistol, and pressed it into Pat Craig's ready hand. "See, I trust you!" he said. "Take it. I dislike the threats. I will just hope for a little rope over the side before morning."

In silence Pat Craig stowed the gun in his pocket.

"I will wish, señor, that we do not come to mutual accusations," Tomas said.

"Ye were lying in wait for us off Los Roques in that boat to get aboard and rob our safe," Pat charged.

"I thought that seamen would less begrudge a little money to refit my schooner than would landsmen," Tomas said. "I will discover that I am right, before the sun comes."

"That ye'll not," said Pat Craig. "And further, ye won't give me away to the Captain in the morning."

"No?" Tomas shrugged. His teeth gleamed. "And how will you stop me, señor?"

"I won't stop ye," Pat said shortly. "You'll stop yourself. I know men. Always, Tomas, ye must risk your neck to excuse your rascality."

He wagged his finger at the red-headed buccaneer.

"Ye won't split on me," he said as he started up the companion ladder. "It's not your style of evil-doing. I know! And I warn ye: Keep clear of the *Kate* tonight."

THAT was his last word, as Tomas, his forehead wrinkled in perplexity, politely saw him over the rail. "I still hope, señor," Tomas said.

The oarsmen put Pat ashore on a little rocky point west of the port.

"Trusting me to help rob my ship!" Pat growled. He stalked through the town, with the pistol bumping his thigh. "The blasted, unspeakable nerve of the man!"

The Old Man was still raising a to-do when Pat came aboard with the innocence of a choir of angels plain on his face. His treacherous conscience was twinging like a tooth, and he wasn't too hopeful.

From the bridge Captain Bartlett hailed him.

On Craig's way up the ladder he was blundered into by Angus Slattery. Angus caressed his jaw and whispered through thickened lips:

"Bartlett still thinks he sighted you on the jetty." His voice was urgent. "But he's inspected your locker and seen your pistol—or one just like it, that I borrowed in time from the second engineer's room."

Pat Craig grunted and stopped dead. Angus was grinning painfully and again he touched his jaw.

"An object-lesson on talk, wasn't it?" Angus murmured. "O.K.; I got it. But don't you be losing your berth over it."

He stepped aside. Deflated even of innocence, Pat went on up the ladder to the Old Man's office. A lad of good intentions, Angus Slattery, worthy of a junior mate's berth!

Out on the black deck, Pat parked his pistol in a corner. Then he stepped briskly into the lighted room.

"Men look out for themselves, Mr. Craig. A ship can't," said the Old Man.

Captain Bartlett's eyes under the luxuriant brows were sharp. Sometimes it seemed to Pat that those eyes in ambush were onto his conscience; sometimes, that the Old Man merely suspected something wrong. But Pat knew now his berth was in jeopardy. And he couldn't baldly lie to the master of his ship.

"Have a nice time ashore, Mr. Craig?" the Old Man asked cunningly. The eyes studied the mate's pockets, but saw no suspicious sagging.

Pat grasped at a chance. With apparent indignation, he drew himself up. His countenance became pained.

"I trust, sir, that ye can rely upon me never to overstep the bounds of judgment in the matter of drink."

"Drink? I didn't call you here to ask—"

"If not, sir, I am willing to submit to an immediate examination by a competent physician," Pat Craig said. "El Frio Conejo is a respectable house where over-indulgence—"

The Old Man furled his eyebrows. He waved Pat away with a sweep of his glasses.

With forehead wet, Pat Craig withdrew. His berth was safe. He retrieved his gun.

A big form came lumbering surreptitiously up to him—Angus again!

"Did we bilk the Old Man?" Angus asked, chuckling.

Bilk? Pat Craig had escaped from the box. Now his blasted conscience screamed that he was in a barrel.

He had set out to hammer a sense of responsibility into this youth. And now what? He, the chief officer, was conniving with him in grossly deceiving the master of his ship. No worse example could be imagined!

Pat turned on the complacent Angus.

"Go to your quarters and turn in!" he commanded.

Too surprised to argue, Angus Slattery stalked away.

Pat roamed the black decks. He talked to himself about the years it had taken him—not a pushing sort of man—to become chief mate. He beat his fists together, he scraped his bristled jaw with a hard palm, and he clawed at his hair.

"Ar!" he said at last. He slipped forward and unlocked the boatswain's store. He selected a length of half-inch line and carried it to the side away from the jetty. He made an end fast and lowered the line into the water. Then, in the black shadow of the Number One boat, swung out on davits above, he slumped, elbows on the rail. He waited, and his conscience ate him slowly. . . .

He stared. The moon had been low and dull gold. Now, higher and smaller, it had begun to silver the sea.

Below on the black water the vague shape of a boat was drifting toward the dangling line. It stopped an instant and then slid on. The rope tautened and creaked on the rail. A blurred form came steadily into focus, climbing.

Pat Craig eased out his pistol. The man came slipping over the rail. It was Tomas.

Pat stepped behind him and jabbed the gun against his backbone. Tomas stiffened.

"Stand still. Put your hands on your head," Pat commanded. He blew his whistle for the watch. The shrill sound split the dark night with offensive violence.

Tomas turned his head.

"Ye were warned," Pat said.

"You, señor?" said Tomas. He was coldly contemptuous. "When it is my voice against yours, you will gain nothing by this."

PAT CRAIG blew his whistle again. He blew the Old Man out of his bunk, the Old Man and half the *Kate's* company. They swarmed around Pat, and his haughty captive.

Captain Bartlett sent the crew away again, harshly, but they lingered in the background.

Angus Slattery stood still, silent for once, pretending it was not he whom the Old Man had ordered away.

Pat looked along the deck, familiar even in the dark, knocked knuckles against knuckles and faced the Old Man stiffly.

"I hired this man Tomas and his mob to start that riot, sir, and took part in it myself," he said. Succinctly he told the miserable story: the teaching of Angus, the designs of Tomas on the master's safe, Tomas' proposition on the schooner, Angus' substitution of the gun in his room.

"There you have it, sir," he concluded, and tightened his lips. The heavens were due to fall on his job—but he hadn't made a lying wise guy out of Angus Slattery.

ALL three were staring wonderingly at him—Tomas, Captain Bartlett and Angus. They wanted the explanation. Why?

"Well, the lot of them can turn blue," Pat Craig told himself, "before I'll drag my lousy conscience out into the open for them, like an oyster out of the shell." He darted a glance at Angus. Was there a sudden spark in the boy's eyes?

Tomas spoke. "I do not understand," he said plaintively. "This does not open itself to my mind."

Captain Bartlett made a vigorous sound.

"Do you still think, Mr. Craig, that this young man, whom you have shown to be so readily deceitful, would ever make an officer?" he asked, his voice dripping sarcasm.

"Yes sir," said Pat Craig wearily. "With a little more teaching—I mean time—he'd make a good one."

Bartlett snorted his contempt. "I'm disrating him," he snapped, and waited, blackly challenging.

Angus opened his mouth. His tongue moved; his eyes blazed. And then, slowly, he shut his jaws again—tight.

Pat Craig closed his eyes. But Angus remained silent. Maybe everything hadn't gone down to leeward—but Pat's own job had. He couldn't forget, and Bartlett couldn't forget, that the Old Man had been kicked in the pants.

"With your permission, sir, I'll take Obregon along to the jail now, make the charge and return for your further orders," Pat suggested in a level voice.

"Do that, Mr. Craig," Captain Bartlett said.

Pat turned to Angus. "Run along to my room and get the handcuffs from the locker where ye put the pistol."

Tomas stirred from his apathy. His eyes appealed.

"No!" he said. "No handcuffs, señor! Surely you will not degrade me before my friends by dragging me along the waterfront, wearing handcuffs?"

"Your friends will be in bed at this hour," Pat Craig said roughly.

"No!" said Tomas. "You do not know my friends or the Señorita Dolores, senor. You are, I think, trying to disentangle yourself, at great cost. Be fair to me, too!"

His voice speeded up, quivering with earnestness. "One *caballero* escorting another *caballero* to the *carcel* in confidence and dignity—yes! But one *caballero* dragging a miscreant—me—along with violence and contempt? No! This you will not do, señor!"

"Won't I, now?" said Pat Craig. "And how do I know ye wouldn't try to escape if I didn't handcuff ye?"

"You do know within yourself, señor," said Tomas positively. "You know well that I speak now not with the lips but with the heart. You do. As you knew I would not tell on you. That was true."

He folded his arms and was silent.

"The devil take all red hair," Pat said to himself in prisoned fury. And to Angus: "Never mind the cuffs!"

"Ha!" said Captain Bartlett smoothly. "You think this man can be trusted not to escape, Mr. Craig?"

"Aye, sir," replied Pat wearily. "There's no doubt."

"I distrust your judgment of this man too, Mr. Craig," said the Captain. His eyebrows would be standing on end in the darkness. "And lack of judgment, Mister, is as serious an accusation as can be made against a chief mate."

"Alone I will take myself to the *carcel*," Tomas offered.

Captain Bartlett rumbled in his throat.

"You have my permission, Mr. Craig, to accept this generous offer, if it appeals to your judgment." His sarcasm was icy.

Pat lifted his head. He looked thoughtfully at the Old Man, thoughtfully and hard.

"Go along, then," he said brusquely to Tomas.

Tomas passed a hand across his forehead. "Honesty—a mere cloak that rascals find useful," he murmured. "But now, señor, you put me in doubt—in agony."

Ignoring the pistol in Pat's hand, he moved toward the gangway.

"You don't really propose to let him go alone?" Bartlett said incredulously. "Slattery, stop that man!"

Angus lunged forward. But on deck Tomas was a shifting shadow in a night full of shadows. Other men joined the pursuit and spread confusion.

Pat moved over under a deck-light. He stood there, not moving a muscle during the hunt. The men made sure Tomas never reached the gangway; but the *Kate Dever* had mooring-lines stretching fore and aft—easy paths for a nimble man.

The Old Man listened to the noises of the chase for only a few moments. Then he stalked toward his quarters.

"We'll settle your hash in the morning, Mr. Craig," he said, over a shoulder. "Turn over your cargo diagrams and papers to the second mate."

NEXT morning the police chief, who looked more a soldier than a cop, was apologetic but persistent.

Captain Bartlett drummed loudly on his desk and flourished angry eyebrows at him and at Pat Craig.

"Plainly, señor, it is not possible to hold a man on such a charge, but it is all that this Tomas Obregon will give us," the chief said. "'Honesty is what I am guilty of,' he keeps saying. 'That is why I am here. Put me in your strongest cell.'"

He shrugged appealingly.

"Humph!" said the Old Man. He flipped his glasses. "He got away with nothing in this ship. Throw him out. No charge."

He continued to drum on the desk when the cop had left. "You were right about Tomas, Mr. Craig," he said abruptly. "But Angus Slattery—" He shook his head. "He'll never be a mate in my ship."

Pat Craig lifted his chin a little higher.

"It's a harsh verdict, sir, against a lad whose worst fault every tick of the clock is mending," he said.

Bartlett shook his head again. "Perhaps, but the clock's not mending *your* faults, Mister. You're oldish for a mate."

Pat Craig steadied himself, heavy-hearted. "That's so, sir," he said. "I'm speaking for Slattery."

"I am fair to my ship, Mr. Craig," the Old Man said.

IT was true. Abruptly Pat realized that that was what kept the Old Man turning over: the ship.

"Men look out for themselves, Mr. Craig. A ship can't."

Pat couldn't keep quiet. "To my way of thinking, sir, a ship is mostly the men in her," he said.

The Old Man leaned forward, his glasses forgotten.

"To your way of thinking—and you're a judge of men," he said. "That's why I'm not dictating your choice of officers, even that young oaf Slattery, when I go ashore as marine super at the end of this run, and give you the *Kate*."

"Me, sir?" said Pat Craig. "The *Kate*? Me?"

"You," said Bartlett. "With your faults." He nodded. "Judgment of men. It's rare—and good for a ship."

His eyes went into cover behind his bushy eyebrows. He spoke dryly, with no great emphasis.

"You see, Mr. Craig, I have a tender conscience, too."

Pat didn't say he had judged that to be so, too.

The Navy in Tokyo Bay

SAILORS GUARDING NAGATO CREW HAVE NEVER USED RIFLES UP TO NOW, BUT WILLING TO BEGIN ANY TIME.

NO TIME LOST IN BEGINNING SOUVENIR HUNT!

by Hamilton Greene

THE NAVY BOARDS THE *NAGATO*, BATTERED JAP BATTLE-WAGON AT ANCHOR IN YOKOSUKA HARBOR. SURRENDERED CREWMEN ARE INSCRUTABLE AS MEAT-BALL IS STRUCK AND AMERICAN FLAG RUN UP.

INOPERATIVE, THE *NAGATO* REMAINS LAST MAJOR JAP NAVAL UNIT AFLOAT. FIRST CRIPPLED IN SECOND PHILIPPINE SEA BATTLE, WAS UNDERGOING YARD REPAIR WHEN TASK FORCE 38 CARRIER PLANES FINISHED IT OFF IN YOKOSUKA RAID LAST JULY. NAVY MAY SAIL HULK TO U. S.

Yokosuka Harbor

Mr. Greene witnessed and shared the final attacks on Japan as a combat correspondent aboard the *Essex*. These drawings were made on the spot and mailed from Japan before his return.

ON SHORE, MARINES CLEAR DOCKSIDE, PREPARE TO BERTH U.S.S. *SAN DIEGO*, BEARING U. S. ADMIRALS, WHO WILL RECEIVE SURRENDER OF NAVAL BASE FROM JAP ADMIRALTY. CRANE LIFTS IMPROVISED GANGPLANK, DIRECTED BY JAP SIGNALMAN UNDER ORDERS FROM TOUGH MARINE.

ELMER HAS FOUND FANCY JAP HELMET. POSES FOR PHOTO TO SEND TO FOLKS HOME IN NEBRASKA.

(BELOW) JAP "SHORE PATROL" IS DIRECTED TO GUARD AMMUNITION-DUMP HOLED UP IN SIDE OF CLIFF.

What They Had Was Dignity

WE'D just occupied Yokosuka Naval Base; and all the correspondents were getting a little bored with it. The story, if any, was not in the occupation itself, because nothing had happened. But nevertheless every newsman who went in with the Navy and Marines that late August morning knew that there were several thousand American boys in P.W. camps in and around Tokyo, and there wasn't one of us who didn't want to see those guys.

Commander Harold Stassen had charge of springing the camps; and just as soon as we'd secured Yokosuka, the Commander went to work. His teams knew where the camps were; and all there was to do, really, was go and get the boys. The Jap guards were long gone. The Americans, staying put, were catching up on their eating from rations dropped them by parachute. Nevertheless, Stassen's men were not happy, because what they found was unpretty.

Several hospital ships lay offshore Tokyo, and the released Americans were brought out to them in small landing-craft. Doctors, interrogators and American girls in crisp Navy Nurse uniforms were waiting for them. I stood on the deck of the U.S.S. *Benevolence* watching the men hoisted aboard.

They were incredibly thin. They hadn't had enough nitrogen, because the Jap diet seems to squeeze along without it; but Americans are not Japs.

These fellows had no idea how we'd fought the war, no concept of the mechanics of our victory. Those who had been captured as early as Wake and Guam didn't know what you meant when you spoke of an M1 rifle or a K-ration. Some had never seen the regulation round steel helmet. They didn't know what G.I. stood for. They didn't know who President Truman was.

One B-29 pilot only two months a prisoner asked: "Atomic bomb? What's that? You got one on you?"

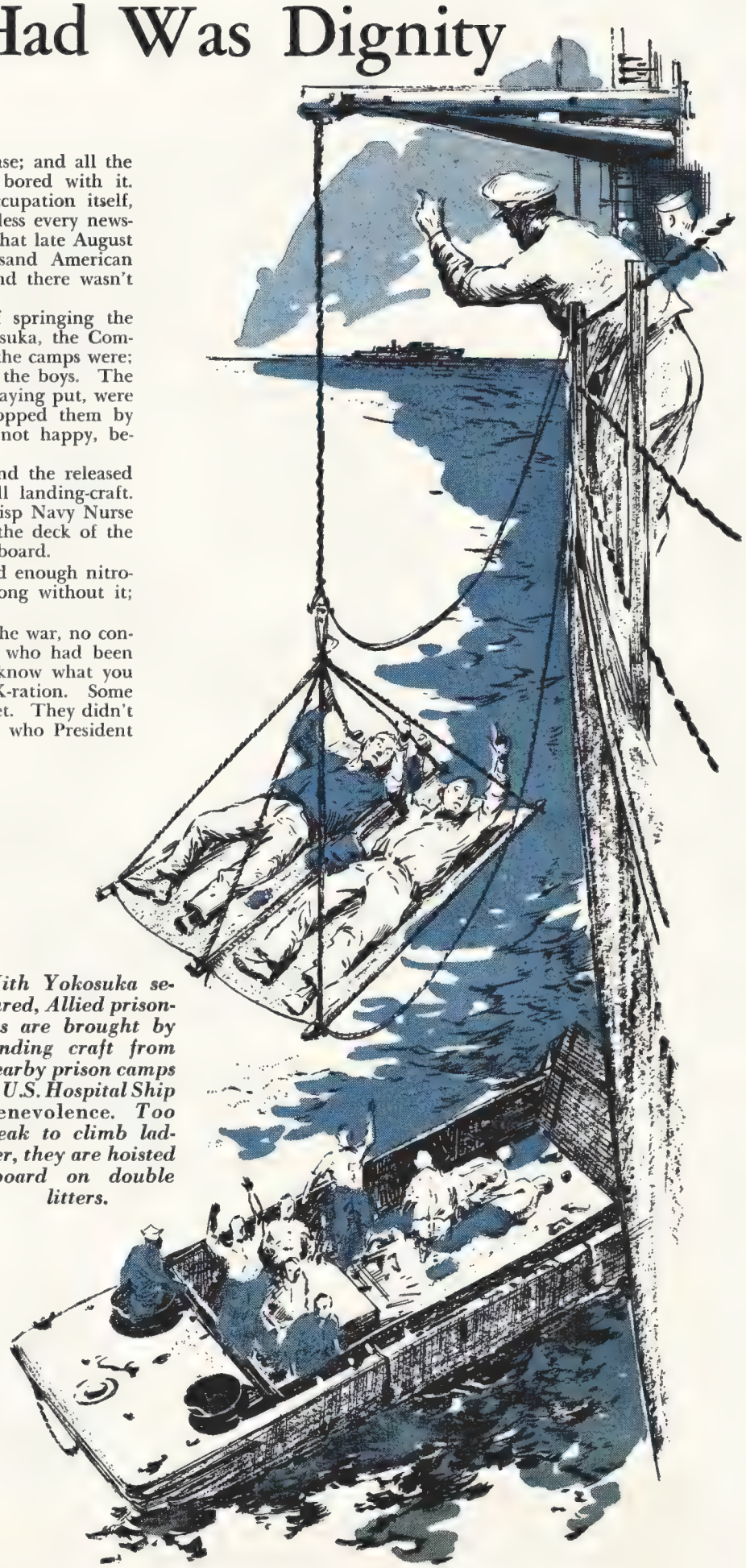
We fired a bunch of questions at them: How did they feel? Swell. What did they want? Cigarettes, a bottle. . . . Basic stuff. Release.

Well, I knew they'd feel that way anyhow. But there was more to it than a picture of so many starved Yanks being hauled up the ship's side two at a time, anxious for obvious things. And it took me a little while to catch what it was.

Mind you, some of these guys had been beaten daily as a matter of routine. All of them showed the scars of malnutrition, and many showed other scars as well. Some had been disciplined by having their hands taped tight with pencils between the fingers. That's very painful. They had had sticks ground into their ear-canals—and other stuff like that. With all the misery, starvation, torture and degradation, wouldn't you think those fellows would be beaten down to the socks? Cowed? Licked? But actually, there was something about them that made me feel inferior.

Those guys had a light in their eyes. They knew the meaning of American superiority. They stood up straight. They were above emotionalism. What they had was dignity.

And looking at them, listening to them, noting their scars but conscious of their obvious contempt of them, I suddenly felt proud that they were my people. For the first time since I went to war, the tears dried in my eyes. There had been times when I had doubted it, but now I know that Americans are wonderful.



With Yokosuka secured, Allied prisoners are brought by landing craft from nearby prison camps to U.S. Hospital Ship Benevolence. *Too weak to climb ladder, they are hoisted aboard on double litters.*

MANY ARE SICK OR INJURED, SOME SERIOUSLY. EACH MAKES INDIVIDUAL REPORT ON CAPTURE, TREATMENT, CAMP CONDITIONS, TORTURE.

IT'S UNFAMILIAR GARB FOR THIS B-29 PILOT SHOT DOWN OVER TOKYO; BUT IT'S NEW AND CLEAN, AND HE'S HAPPY TO BE WEARING IT.

FIRST AMERICAN GIRL SEEN IN TWENTY-TWO MONTHS. "DON'T LOOK NOW, JOE, BUT I BELIEVE THE WAR IS OVER!"

Spies *and* Traitors *of*

The Admiral Who Never Wears a Uniform

ON the historic morning of September 1, 1939, a neatly dressed little man of most unhistoric appearance walked down Berlin's Wilhelmstrasse. World War II was but a few hours old; at dawn German troops had poured across the border into Poland. The Berlin police had closed the Wilhelmstrasse against all traffic. They wanted no demonstrations, patriotic or otherwise, in front of the government buildings. But the little man walked through their lines without hindrance toward the fabulous Reich Chancellory, a structure as grandiose and impious as the Tower of Babel.

He entered the building, passing Hitler's personal guard at the door, who was obviously a high officer, with many ribbons and cords bedecking his dark-blue uniform. The officer stiffened his arm and cried, "Heil Hitler, Admiral."

The privileged little man in civilian dress was, of course, no civilian. He had just been promoted to the rank of Admiral, and he had come to thank Hitler for the promotion. He knew his way around the tremendous building; he knew how to thread the labyrinth of stairways and corridors. The pillars gleaming with silver and gold did not dazzle him, nor did the marble floors and the galleries of monstrous war paintings impress him; they were familiar sights.

This civilian, whom the officer at the door addressed as Admiral, was the new chief of all German espionage, the head of the German Secret Service in World War II.

Admiral Walter Wilhelm Canaris is the mystery man of German espionage. He himself may well be judged by future historians to have been the greatest spy of our time; certainly he is the greatest *organizer* of espionage the world has ever known. He, more than any other important Nazi, has cultivated obscurity. Deliberately he has reduced his personality to a cipher. Few cameras have ever caught his likeness. He has chosen to renounce all public glory. He has never been seen at any of the great Nazi mass meetings in the Berlin Sportpalast. He has never spoken on the air. Though one of the mightiest and deadliest men of Hitler's Germany, he has never been mentioned in the German press.

His headquarters, however, could not be concealed so successfully. He shared quarters with the War Department at 14 Bendlerstrasse, in the very heart of Berlin. Of the thousands who frequented this enormous building, only a few ever saw him face to face. Those who caught a glimpse describe him as small and of slight build. His skin is colorless and sallow, like that of men who work at night. His cheekbones are prominent and lend his face a more Slavic than Teutonic cast. But the name Canaris is Greek; his grandparents were of Greek stock and had emigrated to Germany.

The Admiral does not carry himself well; he walks with a slight hunch of the shoulders and furtive droop of the head. His fair thin hair is gradually shading into white. As he nears his sixties, he is putting on weight. How he would look in an admiral's uniform no one can say, for he invariably dresses as a civilian.

His home address during the War has been a close secret. A handful of his assistants knew that he lived somewhere in the suburb of Zehlendorf, and that his house was surrounded by a flower garden of which the Admiral was very fond. However the War kept the Admiral excessively busy and permitted no time for his hobby of gardening. The garden became the responsibility of his wife and daughter. Finally, Frau Canaris had to take care of it by herself, for with the Allied invasion of France in 1944 the Admiral decided to send his daughter to school in Switzerland. His parental concern is understandable. Fräulein Canaris, who is nineteen, is enrolled under another name in a school near Lake Geneva.

One might have trudged down every corridor in the building at 14 Bendlerstrasse without finding a door bearing the Admiral's name. Indeed, few could have directed you even to the part of the building where his offices were located. In March, 1935, Canaris had a private entrance constructed, and he entered and left by a staircase exclusively his.

A big Mercedes, one of the staff cars, brought him daily from his estate in Zehlendorf. The automobile was armored and had bullet-proof windows.

For years the committing of "perfect crimes" has been all in his day's routine. In consequence, the Admiral's demeanor became that of the perfect criminal or the perfect detective. It is significant that the few men who have met him all allude to his neurotic alertness.

"He considers no situation harmless. He is obviously afraid to turn his back to you; he takes care to face you and let the wall guard his back. His voice and his uncanny poise also indicate a perpetual fear." Such was the comment of an Allied Intelligence agent who met the Admiral.

The combination of power over others and fear for oneself produces a definite type. It gives rise to a merciless character fitted to perform the scientific crimes of the brutal Nazi system. Canaris most certainly filled the specifications for ruthlessness, else he would not have been chosen by Hitler for his role.

His career as a spy started back in 1914. At the age of twenty-five years, he was a naval officer of great promise, already the commander of the cruiser *Dresden*. The outbreak of war found him on the high seas. There was no hope of returning to a German port, so he brought his ship to neutral Chile, where he and his crew were interned.

A German Secret Service officer in the guise of a Red Cross visitor made contact with him in the internment camp. He outlined a plan for a daring escape that would enable Canaris to go on serving the Fatherland. Once free, Canaris was to enter the Imperial Intelligence Service. He would then go to the United States and work under Franz von Papen, organizing anti-American espionage and sabotage.

The escape was managed with ease. And in 1916 an unprepossessing, smallish man with prominent cheekbones came to New York. He called himself Otto Seliger, a Polish Jew. The American and Canadian Intelligence

World War II

Notable chapters from the book by—

KURT SINGER

Services possess huge dossiers on Otto Seliger, who was in charge of dangerous sabotage assignments under the leadership of the reckless spies and saboteurs of the Imperial German Secret Service, headed in America by Franz von Papen and Franz von Rintelen.

The American dossiers also mention the alias of Moses Meyerbeer. Under this name Canaris gave his occupation as music dealer and even dared to pretend that he was a nephew of the famous composer Meyerbeer. As Moses Meyerbeer he organized the dynamiting of the Canadian Car and Foundry Company. Was it some masochistic impulse which made Canaris twice pose as a Jew? Throughout his life Canaris has been pathologically anti-Semitic.

A FEW WEEKS BEFORE THE UNITED STATES ENTERED World War I, Canaris received orders for precipitate action. He was to clear out of the United States, go to Spain and there organize a naval espionage unit. It was in Spain that he met a woman whom he would never forget, a woman who was to play a fateful role in his life. This woman, as we shall see, was to give her life to purchase advancement for the career of Canaris. . . .

For her beauty alone she was unforgettable, as many have testified. Her name was Margarete Gertrude Zelle. She was dark, exotic, fascinating, a passionate and inspired dancer. Born in Java of Dutch parents, she had taken the stage name "Mata Hari," Arabic words meaning "Eye of the morning."

Young Canaris first saw her at the famous Madrid night club, Trocadero. As he entered she was dancing an authentic Javanese Temple dance. Afterward Canaris invited the dancer to his table. He was never good-looking, but his Prussian formality and the forcefulness of his vaulting ambition gave him power over women. It began as a light-hearted flirtation, with Canaris coming to the Trocadero night after night, but soon it developed into a passionate love affair.

The passion did not last long. Canaris had other uses for Mata Hari. His immediate superior, the German Ambassador to Spain, Baron Eberhard von Stohrer, wanted a woman spy to be sent to Paris as soon as possible. This Baron von Stohrer, by the way, was again to be German Ambassador to Spain during World War II.

Canaris was ostensibly a military attaché to Spain. His real duties, however, were not so ornamental. What he was actually doing was preparing bases for German submarines along the neutral Spanish coast, conducting harbor espionage against Allied shipping and planting agents at the Spanish court to offset Allied influence over the Spanish royal house.

Above all, Canaris's job was to smuggle German agents into France across the Pyrenees. It was here that Mata Hari came in. She was to go to Paris on a Dutch transport, dance at the Moulin Rouge and become his key agent in France. It was anticipated that her beauty and artistry would conquer all Paris, especially—and this interested Canaris most—high-ranking officers of the army and navy.

Mata Hari was reluctant to go. But Canaris promised that he would see her soon. He turned her head with promises and with flattery, and he swore he would arrange splendid engagements. She would become the greatest dancer in Europe.

Canaris's prediction came true. Mata Hari fascinated Paris. The most sophisticated roués worshipped at her feet. Money poured in, and Mata Hari loved money. She purchased a small estate near the Bois de Boulogne. There she held open house every Sunday evening. Forty or fifty men would come to vie for her favors, among them members of the French General Staff.

In Spain, her lover Canaris grew negligent; his letters became less frequent. His duties were too pressing to allow time for romantic attentions. After all, the girl was not a German, so marriage was out of the question. For him, Mata Hari became only Agent No. H-21.

In that capacity she did brilliant work. She learned the secrets of troop movements, of new offensives, of fortifications and defense plans. She made occasional trips to Holland, where she reported her findings to German officers.

In 1917 Agent H-21 made one of her courier trips via Holland to Cologne. There she had a prearranged meeting in the loge of the Opera with one of the highest officers of the German General Staff. She had come to inform him about important troop movements from England to France and to give him details on the Allied defense lines. By chance, French Intelligence agents saw her talking to the German.

The mission accomplished, Mata Hari set out for home. Without the slightest trepidation she took a boat which was headed for France via Denmark and England. She was about to leave it when a British customs official came up to her and whispered: "Don't touch French soil. You'd better stay on this boat. It goes to Spain."

Mata Hari thought swiftly. She instantly realized that someone had discovered her. She was fortunate in being on a neutral boat and she decided to stay on it and flee to Spain.

Her frequent and apparently aimless trips to Holland had aroused the suspicions of the British and French Intelligence Services, and she had been under observation for several months. The mischance that enabled French Intelligence agents to encounter her talking to the German officer at the Cologne Opera was enough to clinch the case against her. But the German counter-espionage was also on the alert, and the British customs official who warned her not to return to France was in reality a German agent.

In Spain, she went to the German Embassy. She asked for Walter Wilhelm Canaris, the man she still loved. Her lover was disgruntled at seeing her. She had no business here; her place was in Paris. She tried to tell him what had happened, but he interrupted her and made a fearful scene about her *affaires d'amour* in Paris.

They finally made up and spent a week together. It was none too blissful and at its end Canaris broke his news. New orders had come. It was regrettable but imperative. Her work had been so valuable that it was

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sorely missed. She had to return to Paris, *"mag es kosten was es will"*—at no matter what price.

She bade Canaris a heartbreaking adieu, for Mata Hari knew that she would never see him again. She had a foreboding of her doom, but there was no way out. . . .

The inevitable happened. Mata Hari was arrested by the French, court-martialed and in the fall of 1917 shot. But it was not the French who really sentenced her to death. *It was Canaris himself.* When he ordered her back to Paris on the assignment that was to be her last, he informed the German Intelligence Service in Amsterdam of her whereabouts. To send the message he deliberately used a code which had been discarded for the transmission of vital information. French Intelligence had broken it. His treachery was successful. The French intercepted the message—and that was the end of Mata Hari.

THEN THE GERMAN REVOLUTION BROKE OUT. THE Kaiser went; the generals remained. Nevertheless, many conscientious military men found themselves out of a job. Canaris emerged from the war with the rank of Lieutenant Commander but jobless.

During the next few years he appeared and disappeared. It is hard to say what he did in those unfavorable times. We do know that on his own initiative Canaris was extremely active in organizing counter-revolution against the Weimar Republic. He helped to conceal the arms the Inter-Allied Control Commissions were hunting for. He helped to establish the various Free Corps which were in the forefront of the numerous Putsches that shook the German Republic. In fact, he planned several of them. He was one of Hitler's collaborators in the famous Beer Cellar Putsch of 1923, and, had that conspiracy been successful, Canaris was to have "taken over" the northern seacoast of Germany.

Around 1926 Walter Canaris, in title still a member of the non-existent navy, sank out of sight of the general public. Only a few insiders knew that a man like Canaris would not disappear for good. Obscurely but patiently he was working in a tiny office in the War Ministry. The lettering on his door read "Department for Naval Transport," which meant exactly nothing. In these cramped quarters Canaris toiled away at Naval Intelligence, preparing for *"Der Tag."*

In 1927 the limelight was suddenly turned upon him, to his very great annoyance. At that time one of Germany's largest motion picture companies, the Phoebus Corporation, went into bankruptcy. The company had produced a number of pictures glorifying the gallantry of the non-existent German navy. These movies were nothing more nor less than militaristic propaganda for the navy and merchant marine. The bankruptcy proceedings turned up the embarrassing evidence that they had been financed by Canaris.

The German public was curious to know where Canaris had secured the necessary money, for the cost of the pictures had come to some seven million marks (roughly three million dollars). Canaris answered, "Secret funds." But he would not tell the German court anything further. His excuse: to say more would give away important defense secrets. That was enough for the nationalistic judges. He was excused from further questioning. The financial crookedness was not only never punished—it was never prosecuted.

Nevertheless it created a scandal, one big enough to cause Canaris to lie very low for a while. The German navy packed him off to Spain, where much of the secret German rearmament was going on. He saw to the building of U-boats in the Echeveria shipyard. Although the treaty of Versailles prohibited Germany from having any submarines at all, construction went on quite brazenly.

In Spain, he was a frequent guest of the well-known Spanish munitions king, Juan March. They discussed purchasing weapons for the German army and storing them in Spain. . . .

Canaris's reports from Spain were invaluable to the German Naval Intelligence. He set up an espionage system directed against British and Italian shipping which was to be of immense value to Germany.

In 1929, Franz von Papen, who had been his superior when they worked in the United States, introduced him to Hermann Goering. The characters of Canaris and Goering had much in common, since both men were the Prussian type of Junker officer, and they liked each other from the start. Both had actively participated in the Munich Beer Hall Putsch, but had never chanced to meet. Canaris told Goering that he, Canaris, could bring some of the Intelligence facilities of the democratic German army to the aid of the Hitler movement. Goering agreed. Canaris was the very man to head an espionage apparatus for the steadily growing Nazi Party. He had proved in World War I that he was one of the best pupils of Colonel Walter Nicolai, then the head of the German Secret Service. . . .

Canaris's first job for the Hitler gang was a simple personnel report. Hitler asked for a file on all German officers, indicating their political leanings, their financial situations and their moral attitudes.

It was well known that Canaris and Papen were instrumental in deposing Chancellor Kurt von Schleicher, thus leaving his post free for Hitler. The deposing came about because Canaris was able to steal an interesting document from Schleicher's private desk.

Schleicher had been secretly dallying with the idea of a new legislative measure that would cut off the Junkers' subsidies and break up the vast East Prussian estates into small farms. Certainly, the measure would have eased somewhat the dangerous unemployment problem in Germany. But Schleicher knew well that the time was not yet ripe for risking such a great reform; the reactionary forces in the country were still too strong. Quite probably Schleicher himself was none too eager to have such a law passed, but the economic predicament of the country was driving him to it.

After Canaris succeeded in stealing a copy of this secret document, he immediately turned it over to Hitler. A photostat of the stolen document was presented to President von Hindenburg, along with what amounted to an ultimatum from Hitler. Hitler accused Hindenburg of harboring Bolsheviks in his government. He threatened to arouse industry and the landowners. The doddering Hindenburg was embarrassed and dismayed. He wanted to avoid a scandal, and above all he wanted to protect his Junker friends.

The upshot was that he dismissed Schleicher from the cabinet. Germany received Hitler as her new chancellor and Fuehrer, the world in due time received a Second World War and Walter Wilhelm Canaris, the clever thief, received his high position. He climbed rapidly higher.

CHAPTER TWO

The Admiral's New Spy Technique

HISTORY repeats, and each generation repeats the blunders of the last. In World War II a woman inherited the title of Mata Hari. She should have pondered the tragic fate of her great idol. Had she done so, she probably would not have taken up with the fascinating Admiral in mufti.

The affair started in a simple businesslike way. In 1935 the German War Department received a letter from one of its former agents, a woman who stated that she had worked for the Secret Service in 1917, while she was still in her teens. She claimed to be an experienced agent and asked for a job under the new regime.

The letter was turned over to Canaris, who stipulated that thirty-three-year-old Baroness Reissa von Einem be accepted on probation. To test her ability she was given a simple first assignment in France and Czechoslovakia, checking on the anti-Nazi activity of some German refugees. In the course of this routine work, she discovered that an underground radio station had been set up in Czechoslovakia to broadcast to the German people suppressed news and anti-Nazi propaganda.

The radio station was wiped out in 1936 near Prague, and its operators were killed. The whole affair had been handled with such subtlety and dispatch that it was called to the attention of Admiral Canaris. He decided to see this woman who had distinguished herself on her very first assignment. He sent for her and congratulated her.

Reissa, born Maria Elizabeth von Einem, was a dark-haired aristocratic damsel. Canaris thought that she dressed extremely well, and he liked her willowy figure. He supplemented his brief congratulatory words with an invitation to dinner.

They met several times at the Horcher Restaurant in Berlin, and Canaris won her as he had won the Mata Hari twenty years before. For a brief time Reissa was his mistress; for a much longer time she remained one of his most trusted agents. He sent her to many of the capitals of Europe. Ultimately she settled in Paris, where she entertained a great deal. While not a dancer, she was a fascinating woman with a good head for business. She acted as intermediary in the international arms racket, negotiating the sale of enormous quantities of arms to the South American countries, China, Finland and the former Baltic republics. This semi-legal work placed her in an ideal position for the strictly illegal work of espionage.

Between 1936 and 1939 she became a celebrated figure in Parisian society. And she directed German espionage activities all over France. Her connections were the very best, her intimacies extending even to some members of the French government—to Minister Georges Bonnet, for example. It was through her that Bonnet was induced to become one of the most important listening posts of Admiral Canaris.

Women agents like the Baroness sapped the strength of France, prepared the way for the Lavals and other traitors. Baroness von Einem was in the lead. She scouted for and found talented traitors among members of the Paris police force and high government officials. She was the procuress in France for the Canaris espionage system.

Her activities remained undiscovered until only a few months before the outbreak of the War. Then the military authorities arrested a stenographer of the Military Commission of the French Senate. This stenographer had been supplying the minutes of all the secret sessions to Reissa von Einem. But the authorities were not quick enough to catch the real culprit. Warned by Bonnet's wife, she escaped in her private plane. She was sentenced to death *in absentia.* As soon as the German occupation was accomplished, Reissa tauntingly returned to Paris.

Yes, she could return to Paris, but the very circumstance which permitted her triumphant return meant that her usefulness to Canaris was over. That does not seem to have occurred to her. It should also have occurred to her that Canaris was a jealous man and would not like her to form gratuitous friendships with men younger than himself.

Baroness von Einem should have understood Canaris. She might then have discouraged the advances of the former German representative in Paris, Otto Abetz. Instead, she embarked on a scandalous love affair which became the talk of the capital. A brusque order came bidding her to leave Paris and go to Brussels. On her arrival there she was arrested. That was the last time Baroness von Einem was mentioned prominently in the press. But it was not quite the last news item. A few German provincial papers in November, 1941, reported that a certain Maria Elizabeth von Einem had been sentenced to death by the People's Court. She was executed in the Ploetzensee Prison in Berlin a few days later. But the People's Court had only a formal part in the proceedings. She had already been condemned by Walter Wilhelm Canaris.

THE ADMIRAL IS NOT A SENSITIVE MAN. A COLD sensualist, he needs women, but they are only minor episodes in his life. Basically he is an adventurer. Though his impassive exterior belies it, he loves to play with fire, to play with death. Especially he loves to play with money. He is the only Secret Service chief in the world who is wealthy. Canaris is in fact a millionaire. His secret information has been useful on the stock exchange, and Canaris has made some prodigious speculations.

Daring feats are meat and drink to him. He is beyond doubt fanatically chauvinistic. Like all Prussian patriots, he would see the rest of the world annihilated for the greater glory of Germany. Hitler's inner circle always was composed of such fanatically super-patriotic men. Similarities of character bind Canaris to his Fuehrer. Hitler, too, liked daring feats and surprises, so long as they had happy endings.

An air-borne surprise was planned for Hitler on February 16, 1938. It was a very cold day on the southern coast of England. At 6:30 A.M. an airplane was rolled out of its hangar at Farnborough by a specially selected ground crew. The plane was a rather special one, a brand-new Vickers-Wellesley model, a low-wing monoplane having two motors, a new wing type with a large span and unusual speed. Presently Flight Lieutenant F. S. Gardiner and Flying Officer G. D. D. Thompson boarded the plane. They took off from Farnborough Experimental Airfield at exactly 9:15 A.M.

They never came back.

Nothing more was heard of the two pilots or the airplane—although the British spared no pains in searching for it. Mine sweepers combed the Channel for days, but in vain.

About a year later audiences in Britain and America were entertained by an English-produced motion picture. The title was *Clouds Over Europe* and Laurence Olivier played the lead. It was a spy-thriller. The basis of the plot was the circumstance that for some time important new models of English airplanes had not been returning from their trial flights.

The picture revolved around a German spy center in London, which in devious ways had obtained word of these secret trial flights. The spy center had warned a German warship which was anchored somewhere near the British coast. The warship projected a kind of death ray which automatically stopped the motor of any airplane in its path and made a forced landing necessary. The pilots were taken prisoner and all the new English plane models fell into the hands of the Germans. Incidentally, the film had a happy ending: the British flyers finally overwhelmed the crew of the German warship and in turn took them prisoner.

MORE INTERESTING THAN THIS SILLY MOVIE PLOT WAS the story behind the motion picture. The company that released it was called Harfield Productions, a firm founded for the sole purpose of making this picture. As co-

authors the names of Arthur Bloch and William Jack Wittingham were cited. But there was another author who got no credits. This third and most important author was much more than a script-writer; he was the man who had contributed the germ of the plot and who was behind the entire production. This man had no connection with the film world of Europe or America and his motive for producing the picture was a motive no ordinary producer would have.

That man's name was Sir Robert Vansittart. His title at the time was Permanent Undersecretary of the Foreign Office, and in this capacity he was also chief of the British Intelligence.

When we know this, we are no longer astonished at the strange coincidence between the plot of the movie and the fact that one of the most important British airplane models had disappeared. Sir Robert Vansittart, when he sketched the outline for the picture, knew exactly where the lost Vickers-Wellesley model was.

He was well aware that as soon as the Vickers plants had begun experimenting with low-wing monoplanes in 1936, the Nazis had had a scare. They feared that the British innovations might be decisive weapons in the coming war. Consequently they did their best to seize blueprints of the new Vickers-Wellesley (a forerunner of the Wellington). But their efforts failed. As a last resort Admiral Canaris resolved to get hold of a real model.

On February 12, 1938—that is, four days before the trial flight—a sealed envelope was sent from the Air Ministry in London to Farnborough. It gave a chart of the route the model was to take. The envelope was not to be opened until the two officers were actually seated in the machine.

Nevertheless, the contents of the envelope were known in Berlin within twenty-four hours. This was the kind of game Admiral Canaris liked. It was, remember, 1938, still peacetime with its unlimited possibilities for espionage. Europe was still praying for peace when Canaris ordered a 600-ton German submarine anchored at a point in the North Sea over which the airplane was scheduled to fly.

The U-boat was armed with three-inch guns which could have knocked the plane out of the sky at a height of twenty thousand feet. According to instructions, however, the plane flew no higher than six thousand feet.

There were a number of other German U-boats near by and on the alert.

When the plane appeared, the submarine shot it down. The German commander was instructed to kill the pilots, should they be alive. Whether or not they survived the crash will probably never be known. But the prize, the Vickers-Wellesley, was taken apart, stowed away in the submarines, and brought to Germany a few hours later. British Military Intelligence traced it without any trouble in Kiel and Berlin. The capture of the model, however, was a waste of effort as far as the German Luftwaffe was concerned, for after studying the model their experts decided that such planes could never be manufactured by mass production.

The British Intelligence Service also found out who had been behind the daring theft. On learning the name of the man, Sir Robert Vansittart asked Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain to take some action. But Chamberlain, wary of irritating the Germans, preferred to let the matter rest. Since there was no other way of administering a rebuke, Vansittart conceived the idea of producing the movie. By it, he would make plain to the German military espionage that he was not being fooled. . . .

THIS WAS ONLY ONE OF THE NUMEROUS TIMES THAT British Intelligence was pitted against Admiral Canaris. Another incident was closely related to the capture of the Vickers model. Canaris himself took a trip to London a few weeks before launching this plot. He arrived in London on January 21, 1938. . . . The exact day he left is not known.

Though Canaris entered on a false passport, the British Intelligence Service knew of his presence almost immediately. The information had been secured from another German agent whom the British had arrested, a man with two names and two passports, a certain Ludwig, alias Winkler.

Canaris spent January and part of February trying to lay his hands on certain items, aside from the Vickers-Wellesley model about which he was most keen. The items were a new 14-inch gun, a new depth charge, a new detonator testing apparatus and a confidential bulletin on explosives used in naval warfare.

The gun, the depth charge and the testing apparatus were produced in the Woolwich arsenal. Canaris had a number of agents planted there, the most important being P. E. Glading, who had worked there since 1928, and Albert Williams, an armament inspector; also there were George Womack, foreman of the gun section, and C. W. Munday, assistant chemist at the arsenal.

British Intelligence knew pretty well what was going on. It knew, for example, that Glading had met Canaris through a certain woman. For that woman was a British counter-espionage agent. (The dossiers always alluded to her as Miss X. Her real name cannot be mentioned.)

The purpose of Canaris's trip was the delicate work of preparing the ground. Later that year, Canaris and Glading met in Holland. Also present was an Englishman named Kelly. The rendezvous took place in the office of the German Military Attaché at the Hague.

Kelly was an employee of the Euston Shell factory in Lancashire, which at that time employed fourteen thousand workers. Canaris offered Kelly thirty pounds a week, in return for gathering valuable information.

Kelly, however, had been under surveillance before he left England. A Scotland Yard man followed him throughout his trip, and upon his return he was arrested. Kelly proved quite amenable to the proposals Scotland Yard laid before him. He would go on playing his part for the Nazis. He would supply them with bogus material which the British authorities would give him, and he would let the British authorities know everything he could discover about German espionage. This bit of counter-espionage can now be disclosed, but apparently Canaris never caught on.

The British Secret Service nevertheless could not plume itself on a complete triumph over Canaris. They had had their man successfully shadowing Canaris and his agents in Holland, but four years later they learned that they had been outwitted in some respects.

The watchful eyes of Scotland Yard had missed some other important meetings and conferences. Two agents from Ireland had their first conference with Canaris at the German Embassy. They discussed neutrality and espionage in Ireland, received instructions, codes and orders for action whenever war broke out.

Had the British known this in 1938, much underground work in neutral Ireland might have been prevented. But Canaris won that round.

DURING THE MUNICH CONFERENCE IN SEPTEMBER, 1938, Canaris succeeded in putting over a coup which ranks among the most daring in modern espionage. He got hold of the complete mobilization orders of the French navy even before the orders had been signed by Admiral Darlan. The deed was done by a Second Class Ensign, Elophe Marc Aubert, who was in touch with Canaris through his pretty blonde mistress, Marie Jeanne Maurel.

Later the Nazi press openly boasted of Germany's efficiency in espionage. . . .

Canaris's evil genius functioned perfectly in the months just preceding World War II. Among other feats, he was able to seize the complete British plans for the co-ordination of the air force and the army.

Admiral Canaris's record for the espionage preparation of World War II is almost without a flaw. He wove a huge web of spy centers all over the world. His machinery worked smoothly and swiftly during the spring and summer of 1939, and gathered great momentum after the War broke out.

It was, for instance, not a coincidence that many German consuls in cities and towns strategically situated near the sea were men who had been submarine commanders. There were, for example, Baron Eduard von Spiegel, Consul General in New Orleans, and Franz Nolde, Consul in Le Havre, later Consul in Narvik.

The Stockholm Legation and nearly all the German consulates in Sweden were located in harbors or on the waterfront. The same scheme operated in Finland and Denmark. Many of the German consuls or ministers, whose offices strangely happened to be near the harbors, were members of the Naval Intelligence Service. Under them worked hundreds of subagents, who were all on Canaris's pay roll. Nor were the salaries of this pay roll stingy. Canaris was a firm believer in the modern invention of mass espionage and of the adage that the laborer is worthy of his hire.

About this time the Baroness von Einem, whose fate we glanced at earlier in this chapter, was at the height of her glory in France. Another event which falls into this period was the sinking in October, 1939, of the British battleship *Royal Oak* at its base in Scapa Flow. At the time it was both a mystery and a scandal. A German U-boat had been impertinent enough to enter Scapa Flow! Today we recognize it as a clear case of clever espionage. An alleged Swiss watchmaker who signalled the German submarine and engineered the sinking of the *Royal Oak* had been one of Canaris's trusted agents for years. . . .

Canaris did not concentrate on Europe alone. His hand reached out to the Near East. His chief agent in Iran was the well-known archeologist, Max von Oppenheim, who in his frequent trips around the country engaged in anti-British propaganda among the Arabs. Canaris had his spies in Palestine, who furnished the Arabs with arms and urged revolt against England. Canaris's most trusted agent in this region was a certain Dr. Fritz Grobba, an expert on Arabian affairs who had been German Minister to Afghanistan. Later Grobba was made Minister to Iraq, where he poisoned the country with anti-British propaganda and assembled an army of fifth columnists. After the outbreak of the War, Grobba settled some agents comfortably in Bagdad in the Italian Legation, while he himself shuttled between Saudi Arabia, Syria and Iran. The Iraq uprising in 1941 was his personal achievement, and thus can be credited to Canaris's books. It caused the British no small trouble to put down.

Still later—during the latter part of 1941 and on into 1942—Canaris set up new espionage headquarters in Athens. From this vantage point his agents covered British-controlled territory from Syria far into the Mongolian desert. He thus spread an espionage net which was soon reputed to encompass advanced positions on the Japanese side of Burma and in northern Indo-China. Communication was maintained by desert caravans equipped with modern ultra-short-wave receivers and transmitters. Such instruments employ waves so weak that only a post very close by can pick up the code messages. By these means intelligence was transmitted in short jumps over the desert until it finally reached Berlin or Tokyo.

It certainly seems a fantastic achievement, which we would have difficulty in believing but for the fact that it is attested to by the branches of the British and U. S. Intelligence Services; working independently, both of them caught onto this smart trick of Admiral Canaris.

Up to November, 1942, Admiral Canaris was one of the most successful figures in World War II. Occasionally a rumor would crop up that Canaris had fallen into disfavor with Hitler, that he had been retired or that his job had been taken over by a close collaborator and friend of Professor Karl Haushofer. These rumors invariably proved to be lies and it may be suspected that they originated with Canaris himself. He has always endeavored to screen his affairs, and he would certainly enjoy making the world think him dead, since then his work and Werewolf organization would go on more merrily than ever.

When it became evident that the Germans were destined to lose this War, when after the African debacle came Italy, France, Belgium and Holland, Canaris grew more and more desperate. The German army ran into defeat after defeat. Hitler decided that Canaris had made a bungle of Africa, where Marshal Rommel had previously been so successful. And certainly he seems to have slipped up on the job. German Intelligence officers who were taken prisoner told their captors, "Our office hadn't the slightest idea that the American General Mark W. Clark had visited Africa to look the ground over before the invasion."

The head of the German espionage must have felt very chagrined. Canaris rushed to all the battle fronts and took hasty measures. He went to Italy during the campaign and frantically tried to organize a network of spies reaching into the liberated parts of Italy. He hoped that by this transmission-belt of spies the Germans who were fighting doggedly in Northern Italy would be tipped off on Allied movements.

The successful organization of a network of global espionage is a considerable achievement. What sort of life lies behind that achievement? What principle does Canaris follow? If he follows any, it is certainly the principle of ruthlessness. "The art of espionage," as Canaris calls it, is a cruel art. The capture of the Vickers-Wellesley model involved murder; so did most of his plans. It was, for example, a cruel inspiration of the Admiral's to shoot down a Swedish courier plane in 1940 on its way from Stockholm to Moscow. The plane was carrying an outline for a Finnish-Russian armistice, as well as secret maps of Baltic defenses. Besides, it carried hundreds of pounds of mail and a few diplomats as passengers. It plainly displayed the signs of the Swedish three crowns, and the neutral colors of blue and yellow. But the German fighter planes pretended not to see all this when they attacked the courier plane as it was crossing the Baltic Sea. The fighters were in communication with German submarines. When his spies at the Bromma Airfield in Stockholm radioed Germany that the courier plane was leaving, Canaris mustered all his weapons.

Two fighters shot down the unarmed neutral courier plane. That passengers were killed was incidental; the next day the mail and precious documents were at 14 Bendlerstrasse in Berlin. Canaris scanned them quickly. He learned what Russia and Finland were planning for the near future. New and drastic instructions were immediately sent to the German Ambassador to Finland, von Bluecher.

Meanwhile the Russian Foreign Office was waiting for the courier plane; insistently the Russians queried the Swedish government to find out what was holding it up. They sent out reconnaissance planes, but the courier plane had vanished from the face of the earth.

Canaris had outwitted the Russians.

In Moscow a man sat flushed with anger. He smoked one cigar after another, and his assistants, members of

the Russian Secret Service, with headquarters at Lubianka Street, whispered anxiously to each other. They knew that the person who had so profoundly irritated their boss, Laurenti Beria, was headed for trouble. You might outwit the Soviets once, but the OGPU had turned the tables more than once. . . .

CHAPTER SEVEN

Battles for Weather Stations

IN August, 1942, the Coast Guard stationed in Boston was more excited than it had been since the war was started. The Boston docks were a scene of great activity, with police cordons closing the piers to the public. A big convoy of army cars was drawn up, and squads of military and naval police made an impressive spectacle in their uniforms. FBI agents, Naval Intelligence and Army Intelligence officials were also there.

A few hours earlier, the Boston Coast Guard station had received word from one of their cutters that she had captured an enemy vessel off Greenland and was bringing several dozen prisoners to Boston.

Under escort of the Coast Guard cutter, a small Norwegian vessel named the *Busko* came into Boston harbor. As the boat entered the port, the Quisling flag of the Cross and Sun was hauled down. The men on board began wildly gesticulating. There were only a few Germans among them; the majority seemed to be Norwegian.

The men cried out passionately: "We aren't quislings. We aren't Nazis." They were ordered to be quiet. Interpreters informed them that they would soon get a fair hearing. The few Germans among the *Busko's* prisoners of war were mute, pale and grim.

High officers of the Army and Navy conducted a search of the *Busko* that lasted for hours. They found that the boat was certainly not an ordinary Norwegian trawler or fishing boat. Penetrating its camouflage as a fishing boat, they found a half-dozen short-wave sets, highly specialized meteorological instruments, excellent maps of northeast Greenland and marine maps of the waters between Iceland and Greenland, the world's largest island.

The exhausted prisoners were well treated by the Americans and provided with fresh clothes, clean underwear, GI food and what they most craved—coffee and cigarettes, which they had not enjoyed for many months. The next day hearings began before a panel made up of men from the various government agencies conducting the investigation.

The Germans admitted that they had planned a surprise landing at Greenland. They refused, however, to give further details. The Norwegians claimed that they had been forced by the Quisling government to navigate the *Busko* for the Nazis. They were all experienced whalers and knew the Arctic waters. They protested that they were in no way responsible for any attack or espionage activity in Greenland. The Americans listened to the story with some perplexity.

One of the Norwegians whose name cannot be disclosed at the date of writing commanded attention. Let's call him "Anders Andersen." Andersen insisted that he be put in direct touch with the Free Norwegian government, the Norwegian Consul in Boston and the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Washington. He said that he would talk to them and talk freely.

There was no reason why the American authorities should refuse this—after all, Norway was a member of the United Nations. Andersen's interview with the American and Norwegian authorities proved of the greatest value, for he supplied highly interesting facts about Nazi activities in Arctic waters and in Greenland.

Andersen revealed he was a trusted member of the Norwegian underground, whom the Norwegian government instantly recognized. He had entered the Quisling Party as counter-agent for the government of King Haakon and played his difficult role well, for he had maintained at the same time an excellent record in the Nazi Party. This, and his knowledge of shipping, stood him in such good stead that he was appointed to the Arctic Office in Oslo, a bureau that had formerly been a research department of the Norwegian government handling all scientific questions referring to the Arctic regions.

The Nazis had taken over this bureau and made it into a war agency, and it now provided the Nazi navy and air force with necessary data on the Arctic regions. The head of the office, whose title in Norwegian is *Ishavskontoret,* was one Adolf Hoel, a middle-aged quisling who had worked with the Nazis for a long time. Andersen had worked under Hoel. Most of the Norwegians on the *Busko,* he revealed, had previously been employed by the Arctic Office.

Andersen explained that Hoel's Norwegian Arctic Office was a subsidiary of the Axis Arctic Office whose seat was in Berlin. This bureau had begun as a branch of the foreign division of the SS, the Elite Guard. The Berlin head was SS Colonel Paul Burckhardt, a prominent scientist and meteorologist, who had traveled much in Greenland, northern Scandinavia and Denmark. In my book, *Duel for the Northland,* I had occasion to tell a great deal about Burckhardt.

ONE DAY IN 1940 A MEETING TOOK PLACE IN BERLIN between Adolf Hoel, Burckhardt and his right-hand man, Vitalis Pantenburg. Pantenburg had worked with Greta Kainen and Friedrich Ege in Finland. He was fairly notorious as one of the chief spies in the northern parts of Europe. Pantenburg, then about forty-five years old, was highly valued by Admiral Canaris. The Canaris office had ordered him to whip together a secret expedition against Greenland. Hence this conference.

The expedition's purpose was to secure control of certain bases, which could be used as airfields. In addition, they wanted weather stations set up which would provide the air force with invaluable information for European operations. Weather stations were essential to Germany's war effort. From Greenland and other Arctic spots, the weather for the whole continent of Europe can be determined. In particular, the weather over Germany can be predicted, which means the ability to predict the strong likelihood of RAF or American Flying Fortresses seizing good weather to make air raids against Germany.

All this was carefully explained by the counter-agent Andersen in Boston. He made it clear why Admiral Canaris wanted a foothold in Greenland. Canaris's object was the seizure of *Wetterstationen,* that is, weather stations for the German War Department. So Canaris had projected an expedition of two fishing boats, of which the *Busko* was the first. The second boat sent out, the *Furenak,* had likewise been captured—by a Free Norwegian patrol boat.

Andersen had volunteered for the Greenland expedition in order to escape from Norway. He had been hoping that the *Busko* would be waylaid. . . .

Andersen and the rest of the crew pieced together, from their separate bits of knowledge, a fairly complete picture of Nazi espionage plans not only in Greenland, but in Iceland and regions around the North Pole.

The German prisoners aboard the *Busko* feared they would be shot as spies. In their desperation they had tried an abortive mutiny while the boat was being brought to Boston. The voyage all the way from the icy waters of Greenland had been a hard one; it had included

a narrow escape from collision with an iceberg. Though the Germans were treated decently in Boston, their hostility remained. One of their lieutenants offered a high bribe to the American guards to give them a chance to escape. However, as one Coast Guard man said in a mixture of German and English: "Mac, du could us nicht briben. Wir are Americans."

Not long after the official hearings, where evidence had been willingly supplied by the Norwegians, and unwillingly by the Germans, the author of this book was called in by the FBI and the War Department. Without disclosing any secrets, it can now be told that I was questioned for several days concerning Nazi agents in the Arctic regions. The FBI and War Department knew of my articles on Iceland and Greenland. They knew that in the past I had investigated Nazi agents in the Scandinavian countries. My information, it was hoped, would supplement that obtained from the *Busko* and *Furenak* prisoners.

The Norwegian counter-agent Anders Andersen had mentioned three names besides that of Canaris: Dr. Paul Burckhardt, Adolf Hoel and Vitalis Pantenburg. Did I know anything about them? I certainly did, for anyone acquainted with Nazi espionage in Sweden, Finland and Denmark would rapidly discover that these three were the ones who pulled the strings. They were all on the blacklist of the Scandinavian police and had been paid agents long before the War started.

The cleverest was Dr. Paul Burckhardt, a genial man who had had no interest in politics before the Nazis came to power. He was an expert meteorologist and geologist, far more interested in the bare earth than in the nations living on it.

The Nazis were prompt to appreciate his work. They saw it as a contribution to the building of the Nordic Reich. They praised him, gave him the title of Colonel, set him up in a splendid office and subsidized his studies.

One day he was asked by none other than Admiral Canaris whether he would care to visit Iceland. He was put at the head of an archeological expedition, and Burckhardt and ten other Nazis set out for Iceland. That was in 1937 and the Icelanders welcomed the scientific expedition cordially. In fact, the scientists became guests of the most prominent Icelanders.

Burckhardt's group stayed in Iceland for about six months, but by no means limited themselves to the cementing of social relations. Burkhardt drew up a careful analysis of the sources of raw material and the industrial possibilities of the country. He mapped certain parts of Iceland, marking out locations for possible airfields and meteorological stations. He noted the depth of certain fjords and harbors. He compiled a great many weather charts, and made a general report on weather conditions in Iceland and their significance for German aviation.

When he turned his mind to it, the scientist made a first-rate spy. His scientific expedition included a young lady named Gudrun, a native Icelander. Her mission was to scout for young Icelanders who were promising espionage material. They would be invited to study in Germany where they would be entered in one of Canaris's spy classes and groomed to be prospective agents in the Arctic.

When the party returned to Germany, Burckhardt was made head of the Nazi Arctic Office in Berlin.

A few months later, Admiral Canaris sent another of his good men, Vitalis Pantenburg, to the Arctic areas. But Pantenburg was so unfortunate as to be arrested after only three weeks, when he was caught photographing details of the Fortress of Boden in Swedish Lappland, and for this he was later deported from Sweden. Pantenburg's next mission was to Finland. There he completely mapped all of Arctic Finland. His surveys were the groundwork which enabled the Nazis to establish several submarine bases between the North Cape and the Finnish harbor of Petsamo. From these bases attacks were launched against the Allied lifeline, the convoy route to Murmansk.

Admiral Canaris, however, had to moderate his ambitions. A German invasion of Iceland, on which he had so fondly counted, was out of the question, for the British got there first. Moreover, in the invasion of Norway the Nazis lost over one-third of their fleet, and lacked sufficient naval strength to risk a battle for Iceland. While they hesitated, the British troops came in force and took over.

Canaris therefore had to look farther north. There the Arctic islands were still more sparsely populated, and afforded openings for *Wetterstationen.* His choice fell upon Greenland.

GREENLAND'S POPULATION IS VERY SMALL. IT CONSISTS of some seventeen thousand native Eskimos and about five hundred officials of the Danish government. The island's size is 736,518 square miles, which is an area equal to that of the twenty-six states east of the Mississippi. It is covered by perpetual ice. As you pass farther north, the winter twilight grows darker and darker.

The *Busko* expedition was only a small incident in the fight for Greenland, but it was enough to make the United States Greenland-conscious. The situation was sufficiently urgent to impel the Danish Minister to Washington, Henrik de Kauffmann, to request the United States to take on the job of protecting Greenland. Thenceforward, the U. S. Navy, Army and Coast Guard assumed responsibility, as did G-2, the Military Intelligence Service and the FBI.

One of the neatest espionage tricks of the War can now be revealed. It took place in this obscurest of battle areas.

The Arctic Office of Admiral Canaris knew that the northern reaches of Greenland, lying under heavy snow, were patrolled by a very small group of Danish officials.

Now, it is an almost impossible task to patrol an area covering seven meridians, whose rough coast is indented by thousands of ragged fjords. The Danish patrol squad relied on dog-drawn sleds. Greenland took pride in her Arctic sled corps which traveled about with all the paraphernalia of a North Pole expedition.

Canaris calculated that this small patrol force could not possibly protect the entire coast of the world's largest island. He decided to build his weather stations in Greenland. He was audacious enough to consider establishing a few secret airfields, too, and a possible submarine base. If he could do this, the Battle of the Atlantic might still be won for the Nazis.

Making their rounds in 1943, far in the North near Mackensie Bay, the Danish patrol squad found evidence of strangers on the icy coast. They saw prints in the snow, prints of men and dogs and sleds. The Danish administration had no knowledge of any inhabitants being there, or of any expedition, and consequently immediately suspected that the Nazis had landed. The sled corps sent word to the authorities at Julianehaab, the capital of Greenland. The Danes informed the Danish Minister in Washington, the Greenland Mission in New York and the United States Intelligence Service.

The drama began. The U. S. State Department notified the Danish sled patrol, headed by the army captain Ib Poulsen, to try to get the exact location of the intruders. After three weeks of cautious reconnaissance, Poulsen radioed the American Intelligence Service that the Nazis had landed a formidable expedition near the fjord of Eskimonaes.

It happened that there was another group of Danes whose permanent outpost was very close to Eskimonaes.

The Americans suggested that this outpost, which was threatened by the Nazis, be given warning.

Two Danes, Eli Knudsen and Marius Jensen, were sent out as messengers to warn the other outpost. But the Nazis had already attacked. The small garrison of Danes managed to flee south to one of the ice islands, Ellaoe. This flight through ice and snow took two weeks, but luckily they had sufficient provisions. It was only their familiarity with the ice islands and their intimate knowledge of local conditions that saved them from massacre.

The Nazis then destroyed everything at the Eskimonaes outpost, retaining only the weather station which they moved to a point farther north to use for their own weather reports. Thereafter weather reports were sent daily to Germany. It may be presumed that Admiral Canaris was well satisfied.

Soon, however, the Germans in Greenland reported that two Danes of the patrol group had fallen into their hands. These men were the messengers who had been sent to warn the Eskimonaes group. Canaris was not elated at this news. He could well fear that the disappearance of the Danes would bring unpleasant developments. The Americans might come in. Therefore he short-waved his Nazis to hold on to their prisoners, since they would be useful as hostages. He also told them to move on to Sabine Island, where they were to continue to send weather reports.

The weather spies established new headquarters at Sabine Island, lying off the northeast coast of Greenland. Here they built huts, set up tents, supply depots and a meteorological station. Canaris even sent an icebreaker, equipped with ack-ack guns, from Norway to assist them. The Nazis seemed firmly entrenched.

In the meantime American reconnaissance planes were sent out to Greenland to discover the Nazi positions. They were to get aerial photographs and other information necessary for an attack on the spies.

The Nazis saw the planes and realized that not even Sabine Island was safe. They radioed Berlin for new orders. Admiral Canaris replied: "Leave Sabine Island and mop up any Danish sled patrols which interfere with you. Go on sending weather reports."

Then something happened which was not on the Admiral's schedule. One of the two Danish prisoners made a break for freedom. He managed to take one of the dog sleds and provisions. It was a daring feat. By a miracle Eli Knudsen came through successfully.

After several weeks he reached the outpost of Ellaoe. He brought invaluable information. He was able to report on the Nazi strength at Sabine Island, on the icebreaker, on the Nazis' military equipment. He knew the name of the leader of the German expedition, a Lieutenant Hans Ritter, from the Arctic Office in Berlin.

Now the Americans were ready to back the Danes up. They directed them to come south to Scoresbysund via King Oscar's Fjord and Liverpool Island. Here some American Intelligence officers waited to question them about their experience with the enemy expedition.

In the meantime the Nazis were not idle. They had planned to launch a strong attack against Ellaoe, since they did not know that the Danes had recently cleared out. They forced their second hapless victim to be their guide. With a gun at his back Marius Jensen had to show the way. When they reached the Mygge Bay station, Jensen informed Lieutenant Ritter that the attack could best be brought off by taking a short cut through Moskusoksefjord. Then the Nazi commander decided to send out a detachment to attack the Danes at Ellaoe. He himself remained at the Mygge Bay station to guard the prisoner, Marius Jensen.

The rest reels off like a Hollywood thriller. Jensen overpowered the Nazi leader and wrested his gun from him. He escaped with a dog sled loaded with provisions. He hastened by a short cut to Ellaoe with the intention of warning his Danish friends. Here he found what the Nazis discovered a day later: the Danes had cleared out. Jensen did not continue south to join his comrades. He returned instead to the Mygge Bay station and picked up Lieutenant Ritter to hold him prisoner. Replenishing his provisions, he set out on a long strenuous trip to the Danish headquarters at Scoresbysund. He traveled over ice and snow for three weeks. When he reached his goal, he was completely exhausted, but successful in turning in his prisoner. Lieutenant Ritter was a prize catch, for he was Canaris's right-hand man. He refused to give any information.

The Allied headquarters received a summary of events. A few days later American bombers came and sank the icebreaker at Sabine Island. Thus they annihilated the Nazi spies and the weather station on Greenland.

IT WAS NOT IN THE NATURE OF CANARIS TO GIVE UP. True, Greenland offered no foothold for his pet project, but he could still try farther north, as far north as the North Pole if need be. Once more the Arctic Office dispatched an expedition from Northern Norway. Its object was the establishment of weather stations before the big Allied invasion of Europe should be attempted.

The target of this plan was the polar island of Spitzbergen. It belongs to Norway and the Norwegian name for it is *Svalbard;* it lies only five hundred miles south of the North Pole.

On the same day in 1943 that Italy and King Victor Emmanuel surrendered to the Allies, the Nazis broke their boastful news. Their Arctic expeditionary forces had won a victory; they had taken the tiny Norwegian outpost of Spitzbergen. It was proclaimed over the radio and in all their newspapers.

Spitzbergen had no inhabitants, polar ice being most inhospitable. It was therefore not hard for the Germans to make a landing on Spitzbergen. The last people who had been there were Norwegian and Russian miners who had been sent to work the rich coal deposits. They had departed two years before, at the time of the Nazi attack upon Russia in 1941. Beria and the OGPU suspected that the Nazis would land in that region some day. After the coal miners had left, the Allies had sent a small group of men solely to demolish the mining equipment and anything else that might be of interest or use to Canaris's Arctic Office.

In 1942, long before the occupation of Spitzbergen was triumphantly announced, the Nazis landed. They exercised the greatest discretion. They built a large airfield on the ice and left behind a small but well-equipped garrison. The Allies however had an inkling that something was up, and suspected the existence of the secret Nazi airfield even though they had no proof. Therefore it was decided that the Free Norwegian forces should send an expeditionary force of eighty-two men in an icebreaker and a fishing vessel to Spitzbergen. The Norwegians were ideal for this task, for they were best acquainted with Arctic territory, wished to see Norwegian sovereignty respected and wanted to undertake meteorological work of their own.

The expedition arrived at Cape Linn at the mouth of Ice Fjord on May 13, 1942. They saw no signs of Nazi occupation, nor any sled tracks or ski prints. At this time of year Ice Fjord is icebound and it was obviously impossible to try to reach the former settlement and seat of the coal operations, Longyear City, where the Nazis might be hidden. The Norwegian commander decided to try going through Groenn Fjord to Bärentsburg, where the Russians had done some mining. This was not far from Ice Fjord.

The May nights in Spitzbergen are as light as the days; at midnight the sun is as bright on the horizon as at

noon—differing only in having less warmth and intensity than at noon. During the "night" the Norwegian polar expedition was discovered by a Nazi reconnaissance plane. When the Norwegians realized they were discovered, they made all haste to get their icebreaker to Bärentsburg, only a few miles away. They hoped to get there before the inevitable Nazi attack.

The Nazi garrison had been ordered by the ruthless Canaris to kill anyone who approached. He knew that his last chance to establish a weather station in the Arctic had to be defended at any price.

Before the Norwegians were able to reach their goal, four four-motored bombing planes made straight for the ship. The Norwegians defended themselves with all they had, which was not much. Their anti-aircraft and machine guns scored some hits on the Nazi planes but not enough to put them out of action. The Nazis had no trouble bombing their targets, plainly visible on the ice. Within fifteen minutes one ship was sunk and the other set on fire. Twelve Norwegians were killed and many severely injured. All the men could do was to jump overboard onto the ice or into the icy water. Although it was May, the temperature was about twenty degrees below zero. They dropped on the ice and pretended to be dead. There was no cover and their only hope was to fool the Nazis. The Nazis, however, were not easily taken in. They machine-gunned the exposed men for about an hour—an hour that seemed a lifetime to the Norwegians. By a miracle, only two were killed. When the hour was over, the Nazis found themselves short of fuel and ammunition and flew off in a northerly direction. The Norwegians rose from the ice all but frozen and, carrying their wounded, headed on foot for Bärentsburg and the deserted houses formerly used by the Russian coal miners.

There they gave what aid they could to the wounded. Fortunately, some of their medical kits and blood plasma had been spared. In the deserted hut that had been the Russian hospital they found bandages and alcohol, and these were used in saving the lives of some of the Norwegians.

The next and very grave problem was food and clothing. Their clothes had been soaked and were frozen to their bodies. They had salvaged no food from their sunken boats. Their entire salvage comprised only a dozen pairs of shoes, some light ammunition, fifteen pairs of skis, two knapsacks, a map, a compass and a broken signal lamp.

With desperate hope they sent parties to search the deserted houses of the mining town. To some it might seem that the hand of Providence was active. Or had the Russians anticipated that some day a small group would be seeking refuge there? In a short time the search party found large quantities of clothes, tea and coffee, margarine, crackers and dehydrated vegetables. It was enough to live on for quite a while, even without any meat.

The Norwegian commander, it happened, knew Spitzbergen fairly well; he suddenly remembered that the Russian miners kept pigs, and reasoned that the pigs must have been slaughtered when orders came to evacuate the island. Since men can eat artificially frozen meat, they can certainly eat meat frozen by nature at the North Pole, where the temperature never rises above the freezing point and frozen meat keeps indefinitely. Search parties were sent out again. Sure enough, they found the site of the former pigsties. The snow was scraped away and a number of carcasses were revealed. The men burst into shouts of joy. The carcasses, more than a year old, were fresh and fit for eating.

THE NEXT DAY NAZI PLANES CAME OVER BARENTSBURG. They had seen tracks on the ice and had followed them to the Russian mining town. Now they attacked the Norwegians for a period of four hours. But they did not know in which houses their enemy was, for the Norwegians had deliberately made ski tracks leading to every house. They kindled fires in some houses so that the smoke might deceive the Nazis. Then they crept into the cellars to hide. The deception was very successful. The Nazis used all their ammunition against the settlement, but no one was hit. Nevertheless, the situation continued critical. It was decided that a band of nineteen equipped with six pairs of skis should try to find its way to a certain safe spot on the island. For reasons of military security the place cannot be described.

The Nazis returned the next day and the day after that; on these occasions they had two-engined bombers. They dropped heavy bombs on the wooden houses and set them afire. The Norwegians had to run for it and carry their wounded to the shelter of a cement warehouse at the water's edge.

The next day the Norwegian commander dispatched a highly trustworthy group to find out what was happening in Longyear City. He was sure it was the site of the Nazi airfield and garrison. Certainly everything looked very desperate. With their boats sunk, there was no way of escape. While they were insured against death by starvation, they were powerless before the Nazi air assault. Twelve more men were sent to look for a place of refuge. Their explorations would take days and were, moreover, extremely exhausting and dangerous.

And then the miracle befell. A Catalina of the British Coastal Command appeared over Bärentsburg on a long-range reconnaissance flight. The Norwegians succeeded in sending an SOS message with their signal lamp, which they had managed to repair and equip with Russian batteries left by the far-sighted miners.

But it was nine days before the British rescue party arrived. Each one of those nine long days the Nazis bombed and machine-gunned the Norwegians. The Norwegians stuck stubbornly to their warehouse. After the fourth day, the Catalina came back and dropped a letter asking them to state what they needed. They flashed light-signals giving all the necessary information. The Nazi strafing subsided gradually. But the Norwegians were afraid that the Nazis might make a land attack and capture them.

Finally the Norwegians were able to shake hands with their rescuer. The pilot of the Catalina made his landing. Seven wounded men were taken away by the plane. The rest were left provided with ammunition and anti-aircraft guns and assurances that help would come soon.

It took over three weeks before a British naval force arrived at Bärentsburg. They were welcomed wildly by a crowd of ragged and bearded Vikings. A Norwegian force shortly followed. There was now a military concentration sufficient to wipe out every Nazi in the Polar area.

The patrol group which had gone to reconnoiter Longyear City had come back and brought valuable information. They knew the exact position of the Nazis and had seen the newly constructed airfield. Of course, they had not enough weapons to attack the Nazi expedition, but they had taken care to make many ski tracks. The Nazi weather spies must have thought the little group greatly outnumbered them, for the Nazi garrison did not have more than thirty men.

Now the combined British-Norwegian forces attacked Longyear City, only to find that the Nazis had evacuated it. They must have suspected that reinforcements were coming.

This, then, was another defeat for Canaris's Arctic Office. Spitzbergen remained in Allied hands until Canaris made still another attempt, which we have already

mentioned, in September, 1943. That final raid was at first very successful. The Germans fell upon the Norwegian garrison and killed or captured every Norwegian. They instantly started to rebuild their weather station. But the triumph lasted exactly three days. The British and American navies arrived to wipe out the Nazis. And this time the Allies took over Spitzbergen for good.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Espionage Rides the Air Waves

ADMIRAL CANARIS was now forced to quit the icy region of the North Pole and repair to warmer climes, and the scenery of our narrative changes from icebergs and frozen seas to wide desert sands swept by monsoons. Canaris moved to Africa, where he personally supervised combat espionage in Tunis and Libya.

The battle of El Alamein was still on, with the civilized world quaking lest the Nazi hopes of a march to the Suez come true. There was one man untroubled by that fear. This man knew that with the thousands of planes and tanks and guns from the United States—coming belatedly, it was true, but not too late—he would be able to administer a stinging setback to the would-be conqueror, Marshal Rommel.

He was not a man who saw himself as a Caesar. He liked to be comfortable; he did not like to wear medals. He was fifty-seven years old. His battle uniform consisted of sweater and slacks and a slouchy beret. Fate had appointed him to be not only the liberator of Africa, but the avenger of Dunkerque and the nemesis of Admiral Canaris's African agents.

General Bernard Montgomery, the son of a clergyman, habitually reads two books before going to sleep. The books are always the same—the Bible and John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*. He never takes more than five or six hours' sleep, but that sleep is not to be disturbed; stern orders are issued to protect it. Nevertheless, he was aroused one night in his tent outside El Alamein. British Intelligence officers insisted on speaking to Monty right away.

They declared that their business could not wait and that the General, when he knew why they had come, would forgive their rude interruption of his slumbers. They had two prisoners with them. Their car was loaded with technical equipment. Finally they were admitted to Monty's tent. The prisoners—two Arabs, it appeared—were brought along. One of the officers spoke a few words to the General, who instantly became alert.

He had been looking for these two prisoners for many months. He had not known that they were going to turn out to be Arabs. But he knew that they were Admiral Canaris's principal spies in the desert.

General Montgomery need not have bothered cross-examining the two Arabs; the job could well have been delegated to a minor officer. But his curiosity was aroused and he opened the investigation then and there. He heard an exciting story that night.

The two Arabs, who were seized from the very midst of a caravan crossing the desert, spoke Arabian, English and German. The white burnoose apparently looked as becoming on German nationals as on Arabs, for these swathed figures proved to be Germans. They had been dropped by parachute into Egypt from Marshal Rommel's lines. For many months they had lived among the natives. They had cleverly attached themselves to the Arabs employed in transporting the last-minute Lend-Lease shipments from the Red Sea ports. In this way the Germans helped carry the stuff right into General Montgomery's lines.

They were equipped with low-powered radio sets. They diligently short-waved everything they could observe about the armament shipments and the Allied troop positions. Some Arab students, fanatically anti-British, were their accomplices.

The dispatches were sent to Marshal Rommel and to Canaris's new headquarters in Greece. Some time before, the British Intelligence Service had detected a few of these faint code messages, but the location of the short-wave transmitters baffled them completely. The cleverness of the espionage lay in the fact that the faint messages emanated from mobile units, such as a car, a small boat or a wandering native caravan.

Monty became much concerned about it. He hit on the plan of outfitting every available car with radio-detection units.

And now the signals had been traced. The British found it hardly credible that these signals should appear to come from a lumbering Arabian caravan. Nevertheless, the caravan was halted for questioning. On a camel's back, among bales of merchandise, was found radio equipment. And the British laid their hands on the two spies who had been trying to play Lawrence of Arabia on Germany's behalf.

Brought before Monty, the agents begged for mercy. In the hope of buying their lives, they volunteered the names of other contact men. But they were shot the next morning.

The British exploited the incident to its fullest extent. They took over the code the Germans had been using and sent misinformation to the Nazis in Greece. Best of all, the British learned precisely what Canaris knew and just what he didn't know.

SHORT-WAVE TRANSMISSION OF ESPIONAGE HAS UNlimited possibilities. It operated in Greenland and Spitzbergen; it operated in Africa. It brewed a lot of mischief in the United States.

It was 1942 when a state trooper riding on highway patrol near Los Angeles was puzzled by a radio message coming in on the short-wave dial, of which he could not make head or tail. He jotted down what it was with the intention of giving the communications officer a good bawling out. Why broadcast such nonsense, to the confusion of an honest cop? However, the Communications Department of the Los Angeles police decided that it was far from gibberish. It was Japanese, and it was in code. This incident led Lieutenant Charles W. Ellison of Los Angeles to send out patrol cars equipped with detecting antennae. The cars ran down Japanese radio spies who were trying Canaris's shrewd technique of transmitting information by low-powered mobile short-wave sets.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) became increasingly concerned. Espionage in World War II was no longer a matter of invisible ink and cryptic love letters. Spy messages were almost invariably transmitted by radio. The Boston radio monitor station began hearing strange messages. The Baltimore station had the same experience. Presently disquieting reports came in from stations all the way from Alaska to Hawaii. It can now be revealed that the FCC has tracked down no less than five hundred illegal stations. Three hundred more were in operation in Argentina and Martinique. Finally, in 1943, the U.S. State Department sent an ultimatum to the anti-democratic governments of the South American nation and the French island: they must put a ban on amateur radio broadcasting—or else.

Most of these German and Japanese illicit radio stations were mobile. They attempted to shift location before the authorities could catch up with them—the same trick, incidentally, that was employed by underground patriot movements in the occupied countries.

What could be more convenient than a broadcasting station small enough to fit into a suitcase? An instance is recorded of a mystery radio being operated from a motorboat. The transmitter was cased in a waterproof box. If lake police or Coast Guard patrols approached, the box was lowered into the water, thus hiding the damaging evidence. . . .

FANTASTIC THOUGH IT SOUNDS, AGENTS OF THE JAPANESE Embassy dared to use secret radios right in Washington, D. C. Super-confidential code messages, which could not be entrusted to lesser men, were conveyed from these stations. One of them was located on the top floor of a Washington hotel. The Coast Guard was responsible for exposing this spy station. Others were uncovered close to the waterfront, where they operated to send messages to German submarines lurking off our shores. Intermittently outside of New York Harbor peculiar code messages were picked up. The mystery station was estimated to be some one hundred miles out at sea. The Naval Intelligence Service was convinced that it was a German submarine, concealed close to our shores and communicating with enemy agents. If so, the submarine was probably receiving reports on departing merchant ships.

On the day that a vast cargo of American planes left for England, the FCC, the FBI and Naval Intelligence all heard activity from the suspect station. Orders went out to the England-bound convoy to turn back, and the counter-espionage unit of the Coast Guard girded itself for battle. By means of detecting antennae, several Coast Guard cutters with FBI men on them were guided to the source of the messages. It was no submarine. They beheld a battered old fishing vessel, lying at anchor. It was deserted. Boarding it, they discovered a secret radio transmitter, powerful enough to contact Europe or Argentina. The authorities left as silently as they had come. Two weeks later the pincers closed on an entire spy ring.

As far as radio espionage is concerned, the sky's the limit. It can be flagrant beyond belief. In 1943 a famous heavyweight champion was interviewed on the air. It was on a national, coast-to-coast hook-up with an audience of millions. The broadcast, a big attraction to sport fans, was of the most innocent variety. Nevertheless, right over the heads of several million Americans, this message was spoken in cryptographic code:

"S 112. S. S. Elizabeth sails tonight with hundreds of airplanes for Halifax, N. S."

Fortunately, the *S. S. Elizabeth* did not sail that night. Even more fortunately, no enemy agent was speaking this message. It was the experiment of a famous radio commentator who wished to prove to skeptics in our Intelligence Services that such messages could be forwarded to the enemy, with no one among the radio audience being wiser.

The lesson was so forceful that new radio classes were established to teach methods of combatting the enemy's radio espionage.

LET ME NOMINATE THESE THREE AS THE GREATEST coups of radio espionage of the war. First was the battle of Sedan, where radio espionage brought about the routing of the French. This defeat spelled total surrender for France.

The second was Admiral Canaris's bold stroke of sinking the *Royal Oak*. The third case was that of Bill Sebold, to which we shall now pay some attention.

Bill Sebold was once Wilhelm Sebold. He came to the United States and determined to be loyal to his new *Vaterland*. Like so many German-Americans, he was a skilled mechanic. He worked at the Consolidated Aircraft Company.

Sebold retained many traits from his national origin. He liked beer and sauerkraut and pickled pigs' knuckles. He had many friends of his own nationality. It's not surprising that he was a member of an innocent German glee club.

His aged parents and relatives lived in Germany. Sebold saved money to make a trip back home, crossing in June, 1939, on the Hapag luxury liner *S.S. Deutschland*. On board he exchanged American dollars for the discounted Reichsmarks, which worked out very advantageously. What with the excellent food, dancing and the movies, Sebold had a delightful voyage.

When he landed at Hamburg, the then-beautiful city on the Alster, he ran into trouble with the German customs officials. He expostulated to them; his suitcase, he swore, contained only clothes and some presents for his parents. But there was no remedy for it; he would have to go to headquarters.

Headquarters were quite a distance from the harbor. "A funny country," he thought with superiority, "to put the customs house miles away from the harbor!" Two customs officers drove him through the city. They pointed out the new constructions, the tremendous railway station, the famous Hotel Atlantik. Then they stopped before a gray, somber building.

Wilhelm Sebold looked for some name carved on the façade. No name appeared. Inside were hundreds of rooms, and men hurrying about in brown, black and green uniforms. Sebold began to be frightened. He had heard about the new Germany. Possibly he had meditated a little on its strange rise to power. He had doubted the atrocity stories of the concentration camps. He knew his own people . . . . were not cruel.

He wondered what would happen now. At any rate, the American Consulate would protect him. . . .

From the absence of crates or any evidence of shipping, he gathered that this building was not the customs house. The men led Sebold to a tremendous office. At one end stood an imposing desk, reminding one of Mussolini's. From behind it a man in dark uniform arose and came to Wilhelm. He shook his hand, smiled and was as cordial as an old friend.

"Welcome to Germany," the man in the black uniform said. "Sit down," he invited Sebold. "We are glad to have you with us."

"Yes," said Wilhelm, "but I don't understand what this is about. My luggage, I assure you, is all right."

"Pray don't be disturbed about your little presents," the man said. "We are your friends. You will find us, the new Germany, very hospitable. Have a cigarette."

Revelation came bit by bit. The man revealed his name and his true aspect. The name of Paul Kraus is not unknown in the annals of modern espionage, for it is the name of the notorious head of the Hamburg Gestapo. This man is known to have tortured and imprisoned Jan Valtin, author of *Out of the Night*. Subsequently he forced Valtin to act as one of his agents, until Valtin made a break for safety.

From his desk Kraus produced a folder; it contained facts and figures relating to the Consolidated Aircraft Company. He asked Sebold to check over the information.

Wilhelm Sebold bluntly refused that kind of co-operation. He stated that he was an American citizen and owed his allegiance to that country.

Kraus laughed pleasantly at the avowals. "Once a German, always a German. We do not change our country as we change a shirt." Still very polite, he reminded Sebold that his parents lived in Mülheim, not in the United States. "If you refuse to co-operate with us—I shall be very frank—we cannot guarantee their safety."

Bill Sebold was allowed to go when he promised to think it over. Kraus agreed that such a step needed careful consideration, but he was sure Sebold would see

it their way. This former German will never forget his vacation in Naziland. He will never forget the struggle between his loyalty to his parents and to his adopted country, America. He knew that he was trapped. He had not heard of Canaris, but the brief interview with Kraus had been very instructive.

Bill Sebold took the only way open to him. He consented to work for the Nazis. He was to live in Hamburg for several months and receive espionage training. He was paid well. Sebold explained that he would write his friends in America some excuse for prolonging his stay. Moreover, he would have to procure an extension of his passport. He visited the American Consul, where his visa was extended. On this visit he transacted another bit of business. . . . A few weeks later, a copy of Bill Sebold's confession was at the State Department in Washington. It had been enclosed in a diplomatic pouch and flown by clipper.

Bill Sebold moved to a "Pensionat" in Hamburg. The other lodgers in the house were students for the Gestapo and spy services, and were training for their future profession. Sebold was given a course in espionage and radio transmission.

In September, 1939, when war broke out, Gestapo chief Kraus informed Sebold that soon there would be plenty of work for him. The American had satisfactorily completed his course, and the Nazis were pleased with their bright agent whose family was regarded as hostages for his loyalty to the Reich.

On January 30, 1940, the *S.S. Washington* sailed for New York with Bill Sebold as passenger. He experienced a sinking of heart. He had confessed what his position was to the American Consul. But had his statement reached the United States? And what if there were Nazi agents inside the FBI? What if they had exposed his dangerous double game? Sebold seemed to see spies everywhere. He gathered small assurance from the sight of the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor. He was between two fires, he told himself miserably.

When the customs and immigration officials boarded the ship, three FBI agents were among them. They accosted Sebold in his stateroom. They congratulated him heartily and asked him to give them the dope. They wanted the information right then and there.

Sebold's spirits rose. His adopted country would protect him. He reasoned that the Gestapo could not have detected him; otherwise they would not have let him leave the country.

In time, he was introduced to FBI chief J. Edgar Hoover who became personally interested in the case. Through Bill Sebold, the FBI learned precisely what the Canaris office had designed against the United States, and what information Canaris was fishing for.

The Nazis had given Sebold five micro-films, each smaller than a postage stamp. These micro-films carried complete instructions for his future espionage work and included the names of some contact men who would assist him.

The text of these tiny films required fifteen minutes' reading time. Once enlarged and translated, they were enormously revealing. . . .

They requested employment statistics of aircraft plants and an infinite number of details on anti-aircraft models, poison gas and gas-mask production. They wanted general all-around espionage directed at these and many other war plants:

Bell Company	Boeing
Curtiss-Wright	United Aircraft
North American Aircraft	Lockheed-Wright
Glenn Martin	Pratt-Whitney
Douglas	

It was an arduous plan of comprehensive industrial espionage placed in Sebold's hands. In addition, he was entrusted with quite a bit of money. He was to purchase top-notch "amateur" short-wave transmitters for broadcasting information to Hamburg. He was to make contact over wave length AOR.

J. Edgar Hoover made a lightning decision. America's most modern radio equipment would be put at Bill's disposal.

The "German spy station" was established at Centerport, Long Island. It was a beautiful spot. There, under the most pleasant conditions, Bill Sebold settled down to run the secret station. Men of the FBI would drop around from time to time. . . .

Sebold contacted Canaris's office very soon. He informed Hamburg where he could be reached. He instructed Hamburg to communicate by wave length CQDXVW-2. The Germans had not given Sebold any code for his secret radio, for apparently Admiral Canaris did not consider it prudent to risk a code on an inexperienced man whose co-operation had been secured by pressure. Hamburg now used the primitive device of reversing the letters of each word.

It was quite a day when the "spy" at Centerport decoded the first message from Germany:

"To all Friends of the New Order: Information is urgently required on the size, quantity, type and description of all U. S. war material, the destination and shipping dates of such material and all other pertinent information."

The FBI formed a "little brain trust" to invent "phony dope" for short-waving to Hamburg. Inevitably, some of the facts had to be true. But they were to be unimportant facts magnified to seem very significant. Airplanes which had been judged obsolete and so discontinued could be described accurately.

The information, both genuine and fake, had to seem very convincing. Bill Sebold and his FBI friends cudgeled their brains and they did a fine job. Hamburg was well pleased and Sebold's prestige rose. He was given addresses of Nazi agents he was to assist. He was told where to go to receive more money. Bill explained that he was using a mobile unit, which ran into a lot of expense. The money was handed over to the FBI as well as the names of the contact men from whom it had been received.

The game continued for sixteen months. In that time, the FBI received some four hundred and fifty messages from the Canaris office in Hamburg. Many more items to other agents were intercepted, for the Germans had finally put enough confidence in Sebold to provide him with a code used by other agents in South America.

One of the messages made the grim FBI men rock with laughter. The Centerport station had been cautioned:

"Be careful. You are under surveillance by FBI agents. Do not attempt to communicate for one week."

The FBI was delighted at the "brilliance" of the Nazi super-spies, who after sixteen months had not even a dim suspicion that they were dealing with the enemy's Secret Service.

Finally, it was time to call a halt to the cat-and-mouse game. J. Edgar Hoover decreed the arrest of every single German spy. In one day thirty-three of Canaris's agents in the United States were seized. Some of their sub-agents in Brazil, Chile and Uruguay were clamped down on.

We do know now what an ordeal Sebold's parents in Mülheim had to go through. And we can be sure of our debt to quick-witted Bill Sebold. His work with radio counter-espionage made possible the arrest of eight saboteurs sent out by Admiral Canaris; not long after the dissolution of the fake radio station, the eight were landed by submarine on Long Island, not very far from Centerport. . . .

Beauty Treatment à la Japan

THIS is the story of espionage in Pearl Harbor, a battle which the United States lost, and which Canaris and Japan won, but not to the extent they had planned.

Modern crazes had hit Hawaii. Juke boxes and swing music had long ago drowned out the native music sung by the beautiful Polynesian girls. But here was a brand-new sensation for Honolulu. Every woman on the islands heard about it, but it was most appreciated by the Navy wives. . . .

The islands could now boast of an ultra-modern beauty parlor. Ruth, the store's manager, was universally liked. . . . . Hundreds of women spent the whole day relaxing in the suave atmosphere of Ruth's beauty parlor.

The place was highly fashionable and was the clearing house of all Hawaiian gossip. Women discussed who was in town, who was leaving, furloughs, assignments, ships' arrivals and departures. This was the stuff that made up the life of the islands. . . .

The beauty parlor opened in 1939—before Germany had as much as hinted at her campaign against Poland. Nobody on the Hawaiian Islands thought of war, and few back in the mother country thought about it. But espionage does not operate intermittently. It is a long-drawn-out business and it is always planned during peacetime—many, many years in advance.

For once the plot did not originate in the German War Office, and the ubiquitous hand of Admiral Walter Wilhelm Canaris was not in it.

All the credit is due to Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels. He had held office for two years, when in the beginning of 1935 he threw a party at the Ministry for all the personnel. It was a gala affair, with everyone feeling happy and proud, inspired by the new-born strength of Nazi Germany. Goebbels was in his element. He had never denied that his interest in the female of the species was greater than befitted a happily married man. His affairs with women were complicated and extensive, and this evening promised the beginning of a new affair.

His private secretary, Leopold Kuehn, was here with his young sister, Ruth. The girl was stunning. Goebbels . . . . danced with her the whole evening. . . .

The trend the affair took is not known. We do know its denouement. The Propaganda Minister hastily decided that Ruth had to leave Germany. Was it that Frau Goebbels interfered, or that Ruth demanded too much, or that she threatened to tell? These questions are interesting but not relevant to the main story.

Ruth Kuehn had to get out of Germany. Goebbels, who was not really on good terms with Army or Navy Intelligence—they knew too much about him—turned to another quarter. One of his closest satellites was Dr. Karl Haushofer, son of the famous general and geopolitician. Father and son were in charge of the Geopolitical Seminar at Berlin University. The students of geopolitics graduated into the foreign service, principally into the spy organization under Foreign Secretary Ribbentrop.

General Haushofer was the man who had first welded the bonds between Germany and Japan. He was obligated to Goebbels for the incomparable prestige enjoyed by himself and his school of thought. If Goebbels wanted anything in Haushofer's power to grant, there was no further question about it.

Yes, Haushofer could use the young lady Ruth Kuehn. The old general, who had visited Japan and seen the possibilities there as early as 1914, was in constant contact with that country. Very recently his Japanese colleagues had expressed a need for white men and women. This was a new kind of white slave traffic. Japan's government through their liaison officers, the two Haushofers, requested the services of members of the white race to help in the Japanese espionage service.

Japan, in fact, needed a good many people for Intelligence work, and for many jobs native Japanese simply could not be used. Haushofer informed Goebbels that he had openings not only for Ruth Kuehn, but for her brothers and parents. . . .

The father, Dr. Kuehn, was born in 1895 in Berlin. When he was eighteen he enlisted in the German navy and served as a midshipman aboard an imperial cruiser in World War I. In 1915, when his ship was sunk in an encounter with a British battleship, he was taken prisoner and brought to England, where he quickly acquired the language.

When the armistice came, he was a young man without any real civilian profession. He re-entered the naval service of the German republic as an *Oberleutnant*. Six months later the German fleet was destroyed and he was stranded. They put his name down on the naval reserve list and he had to adjust to a civilian life.

Kuehn decided to take up medicine. He became a member of several chauvinistic officer organizations. Very early he espoused the Nazi cause.

He had trouble making a respectable living, for he proved no good as a doctor and was dismissed from several hospital posts. At last he accepted a position in the Gestapo under Heinrich Himmler, who was his personal friend. Long afterward Dr. Kuehn complained that the Gestapo had been unfair to him. He had been frequently promised a good job as police chief in one of the German cities. Instead, through the fault of his daughter, he was exiled to Hawaii.

AMERICAN ATHLETES WERE PREPARING FOR THE OLYMPIC games; Japan was a good customer for oil and scrap iron; the world had just come through the great depression and peace organizations were flourishing. This was the world picture when a German family landed in the Hawaiian Islands on August 15, 1935. They were not the usual run of giddy tourists. The father was a scientist, a trim, gray-haired professor. They were well-bred and handsome people. Doktor Bernard Julius Otto Kuehn came with his entire family, except his son Leopold, who remained in Berlin as Goebbels' secretary. . . .

It was a well-knit family whose domestic life was a joy to behold. They were here because the father was interested in learning the Japanese language. Dr. Kuehn was also very much interested in the ancient history of the Hawaiian Islands. He traveled around, visiting the old stone houses of the early settlers. Very soon he knew the topography of the Hawaiian Islands as well as he knew his own coat. He loved the seashore and all water sports, as did the whole family. . . .

Friedel, his wife, was a commonplace sort of matron, but really extremely helpful. She could listen and observe details of military significance when to all appearances she was simply a housewife completely bound up in the care of her family. . . .

A family with such interests is fortunate in the possession of a commonplace matron who is beyond suspicion. Such a woman was Friedel, who traveled twice as a courier to Japan during the period 1935-41.

On political questions Dr. Kuehn would remark that he, personally, did not like the Nazis. He was, nevertheless, first and foremost a German. He wrote a number of articles on the early German settlers in the islands, and these were published in Germany.

Neighbors and acquaintances had the impression that the Kuehn family was very well off. Kuehn had some excellent investments in Holland and Germany. During his first three years on the islands, he received about sev-

enty thousand dollars transmitted through a Honolulu bank by the Rotterdam Bank Association. On one of her trips, Friedel returned from Japan with sixteen thousand dollars in cash.

The FBI and American Army and Navy Intelligence have ascertained that during this period the family received over one hundred thousand dollars. There was undoubtedly more than that . . . . not . . . . traced.

Considering the great expenses involved, espionage is certainly not so well paid as is commonly assumed. At the outset Intelligence work is limited to the reporting of gossip, information gleaned from naval and merchant marine men. Later on the espionage is directed against the officer class, especially if, like Ruth, the agent is clever, glamorous and desirable. But, with war drawing near, more and more was demanded of the loyal espionage worker.

Dr. Kuehn was in the service of two countries. Though General Haushofer had lent him to the Japanese, Kuehn undoubtedly worked for Admiral Canaris. Canaris had discovered that Kuehn was a very valuable man, not to be lightly dispensed with.

Copies of all the reports to Japan also had to go to Canaris. In consideration of this, Kuehn thought it reasonable to ask for more money. Besides, his appetite for high society life had sharpened, as had Ruth's.

EARLY IN 1939, DR. KUEHN DECIDED THAT HE DEFINITEly needed a quiet place to get on with his study of the Japanese language. He moved his family from Honolulu to Pearl Harbor. Now the Japanese Secret Service plan, for which he had been sent to the islands, began rapidly to take shape. Ruth established herself as a popular favorite among the young people and the wives of the Navy men. Unusually attractive herself, she had let it be known that she had a flair for the art of personal grooming. When she announced that she was opening a beauty shop, the enterprise was greeted with enthusiasm and assurances of the patronage of all her women friends. Despite the long planning behind this step, even Ruth was not prepared for its instantaneous success. Friedel, too, began to spend much of her time at the new shop. Daily both reported to the head of the family what they had picked up. This information was relayed out of the Hawaiian Islands by diplomatic couriers of the German and Japanese Consulates.

Then one day the Japanese Vice-Consul at Honolulu, sly little Otojiro Okuda, sent for Dr. Kuehn. Okuda told Dr. Kuehn that now was the time to get hold of some real marine information—exact dates, exact facts and figures on the United States Navy in the Pacific. He complimented Dr. Kuehn on his past work, but this job, he emphasized, was of another order. The Japanese would be willing to pay quite a bit more for the stuff, and it would mean a deadly blow against the United States Navy.

Kuehn agreed to take on the job for forty thousand dollars. Ultimately he was given only fourteen thousand dollars as an advance; the rest, he was promised, would be forthcoming after the "success."

Shortly after this conversation with Okuda, Dr. Kuehn began to take daily walks along the fortified sections of Pearl Harbor, accompanied by his young son, Hans Joachim, now ten, dressed in a child's model of the naval uniform. The father explained the waterfront scene to the child who was "just crazy about" every aspect of the American Navy. After a while the American sailors invited the boy on board a battleship, and pointed out some things about this wonderful giant toy. Dr. Kuehn, an alien, would never have been permitted on board such a ship, and he was far too clever to assume that he might evade regulations. So he allowed the boy to go alone.

Following these visits, Dr. Kuehn called on the Japanese Consul Okuda and told him that he had worked out a signal system. It was designed to transmit information on the number and kinds of American ships in Pearl Harbor, and on ship movements in general. The Consul suggested simplifying the code but agreed that it was practicable for signaling to the Japanese fleet. . . .

Dr. Kuehn owned a small house in Kalama, a community located in Kailua, Oahu, close to Pearl Harbor. . . .

The light signals were to be flashed from the dormer window. Kuehn, Consul Okuda and the fourth secretary of the Japanese Consulate, Tadesi Morimura, worked out a most practical code of lights. On December 2, 1941, they tried out their new system for the first time. On the same day, Vice-Consul Okuda received a written tabulation of the number, types and exact location of American ships in Hawaiian waters. The next day Japanese Consul General Nagoa Kita, Okuda's superior, transmitted the data via short wave to the Japanese Naval Intelligence office. . . .

Dr. Kuehn's dormer window was put to use on December 7, 1941. In Washington, peace negotiations were still going on when the Japanese launched their blow against the American fleet. Dr. Kuehn himself gave the light signals. The Japanese bombers hovered overhead, spreading devastation as they received all the necessary detailed information. Everything proceeded exactly according to the plans laid by Kita, Okuda and Kuehn.

But their plans in one respect went slightly awry. The Japanese Consul had arranged to have a Japanese submarine come to pick up the Kuehn family and bring them to Tokyo. The Kuehns had planned the escape soberly. Nothing would have to be packed. They would leave even their toothbrushes behind and would bother with nothing but money. Moreover, once in Japan, the balance of twenty-six thousand dollars was due them on the deal.

But in spite of the chaos and disaster at Pearl Harbor, United States Intelligence officers spotted the lights coming from the window of Herr Dr. Bernard Otto Kuehn's house. Before the Japanese submarine arrived, Kuehn and his family were picked up by the authorities. The professor maintained an attitude of arrogance and blank denial. But all the evidence was against him. An outline of the signal system was found, and entirely too much money, some of it in Japanese currency. The binoculars were discovered, and copies of reports written in German. Dr. Kuehn finally admitted everything. He did his best, though, to shield his wife and daughter, and insisted that he alone was responsible for everything—without success. His family was interned for the duration.

On February 21, 1942, a court sentenced Dr. Kuehn to be shot. Nazis, once in prison, cease to be supermen. Kuehn began to be frightened. For years he had been in the service of German and Japanese Intelligence and now he offered his services to the Americans. They told him that he couldn't buy his pardon that way; the American government wanted no Nazi spies in its employ. The death sentence was signed. Kuehn found his lonely cell a madhouse. He had always been able to find a way out—but not this time.

He begged for mercy and promised to tell them all he knew about Axis espionage activities. Naturally, they made him no promises. What he told remains unknown, but his death sentence was commuted, on October 26, 1942, to fifty years at hard labor.

His son, Leopold Kuehn, who had remained behind with Goebbels, shared the general downfall of his family in another manner—death on the Russian front. Friedel Kuehn tried to commit suicide but was prevented. Beautiful Ruth was not present when her beauty shop was auctioned off.

BLUE BOOK is glad to receive letters from you, our readers, telling us what you are thinking about—about your own experiences or problems; or your opinions on national or international affairs.

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What Do *You* Think?

A Readers' Forum

Road to Rome

I'M home again after thirty-six months in the North African and Mediterranean Theaters of Operation, and I'm walking down the road from the railway station. I'm thinking how wonderful everything looks—the neat houses with their well-kept yards and gardens, the colorful flowers, the green benches in the park near the traffic light at the crossroads, the big red, white and blue honor-roll board with the names of those of us who were in the Service, the silent beauty of the stately pine trees which are so numerous in this part of New Jersey.

The houses all have their own individual fences around them and as I pass one, I see a little girl swinging on her garden gate. She's warmly dressed in a blue play-suit and her blonde curls dance in the breeze as she swings back and forth, rosy-cheeked, the picture of health and happiness. The home town looks pretty good to me. But I cannot help but remember some of the little towns we passed through on the road to Rome. It's the little girl swinging on the gate that gets me, I guess.

I think of one of the most pathetic sights I've ever seen—the Italian people returning from the hills to find their villages virtually blown to pieces by the war. They come back to the sites of their homes because they are a simple, honest people and have no place else to go. They search through the ruins, salvaging bits of furniture, chairs, tables, or perhaps a saucepan. They sit in the yard, surrounded by the wreckage, dazed, and just look off into space. The grandmother goes about gathering firewood, while a small child, blue with the cold and too young to know what it's all about, attempts to swing, carefree, on what is left of the front gate. She has hollow eyes; her white cheeks are drawn and her legs are like pipestems, with a torn bandage around one of them. Her dress is in rags and scarcely covers her thin little body.

One building has part of its second story still standing, and a bedroom is bared to the view. A picture still hangs on the wall. It's a religious picture, and looks strangely out of place amid the ruins. In another upper-story room an upright piano stands next to the place where the wall was, ready to tumble off into space.

As I remember back, I can see the battle scars of fierce house-to-house fighting. The fences, walls, trees are bullet-spattered, too. The once beautiful statues in the squares are now hideously deformed, with an arm or a head missing—a small item compared to the human lives which have been lost.

People congregate in what was once their public square, like so many lost sheep. They talk in little groups, dazed, looking for a leader perhaps, not knowing what else to do. . . .

I wonder if in some small measure their meager crops can help erase the signs of hunger I have seen in so many faces, the faces of innocent people who have been so hungry for such a long time.

And I always think back to that little Italian child, trying to swing on what was left of her front gate. And seeing this other little girl in my own home town, all safe and sound and happy and healthy, I cannot help but breathe a silent prayer of thanks to the Man Upstairs for having kept my little corner of America the way I remembered it.

Buell R. Snyder.

Cloak and Dagger

IS it true that German atom scientists are continuing their research in Argentina? What is Russia really doing in the Balkans? Is the new government of Brazil representative of the people? What trade agreements is Britain negotiating in the Near East?

Questions like these emphasize our need for a permanent hard-boiled U. S. central intelligence agency, which will service not only all branches of the Armed Forces, but also the Departments of State and of Commerce, the Government's new scientific research agency, and any other official departments that must keep abreast of what really goes on in foreign countries.

With the advent of the atomic bomb and the amazingly fast development of rocket-propelled missiles and aircraft, high ranking military officers and civilian experts who should know what they are talking about are now predicting that another war might last only six months; some say six minutes! Months or minutes, isn't it possible that another war could be lost before it actually began, due to our not being informed on the intentions or the scientific progress of some unfriendly foreign nation?

Not until World War II did we realize that the Army's G-2 and the Office of Naval Intelligence, while well trained for the analysis and interpretation of intelligence, were in no position to procure that intelligence, except, of course, through air photo reconnaissance, submarine patrol observation, and similar techniques. Let's have more of the old fashioned cloak-and-dagger sort of Phillips Oppenheim activities, with agents under cover in foreign countries. Military and Naval attaches, who carried this burden previously, are just not equipped nor permitted, under diplomatic restrictions, to recruit secret agents, bribe informers, and carry out the clandestine "dirty work" which real intelligence procurement requires.

The Office of Strategic Services, set up under the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the beginning of World War II, had to start from scratch to learn the specialized business of spying. News of some of its splendid achievements behind enemy lines is now being released to the press. I suppose the United States was the only country in the world that did not have a well organized espionage system operating before the war.

Those who object to extensive defensive precautions, on the grounds that armament races lead to fear and to war, should not find fault with a central intelligence agency, since it would be a strong factor in *preventing* another war and, if everything is indeed on the level in other countries, it would dispel our fears of our global neighbors. Moreover, its economic and diplomatic uses would be of great value to this country's peacetime prosperity.

G. M. H.

A detective of 1857 didn't know about finger-prints, and he had to learn a lot about human nature.

Murder

by FRANK BONHAM

IN Ludlow Street a fine rain was falling. Tom Church kept his shawl wrapped about the lower part of his face as the shrewish wind drove the fine drops against his skin like birdshot. There was no sidewalk; he and his companion kept their eyes out for the deeper puddles among the cobbles. They stopped across the street from a two-story frame building.

"It's Number Twenty-five," Church said. "That's it."

There was no crowd. Death was no novelty in the Sixth Ward, even violent death. The landlady, a Mrs. Garrity, took them to a room down a musty dark hall. With the key in the lock, she turned a resentful eye on them.

"I suppose you'll be telling this to the *Sun*, won't you, to help them sell a few papers and drive my renters away?"

"That's as it may be," said Detective-Sergeant Church. "Have you taken anything out of the room since you found her?"

Mrs. Garrity sniffed. She was a slatternly creature, like her apartment-house, antiquated and ugly. "I aint been past the door," she declared. "That is, only when I went in to see

in Old Manhattan

why she hadn't been out today. Nor will I, while *she's* in there!"

Dr. Lucas, the district surgeon, went in as emotionlessly as though it were a patient he was going to see. But Church entered with somber. eyes. Say what you would, Death left a bit of himself in a room when he passed through. He grayed the light; he made the atmosphere musty.

He had done nothing for Jenny Thomas, the girl on the bed, either. He had blackened her features and drawn her eyes half out of her head. He had twisted her body under the blanket. She might have been pretty; it was hard to tell. The hair on the pillow was a rich brown. The arm slanting toward the floor was plump. She had been about twenty-five.

Dr. Lucas had to cut the cord about her throat to loosen it. He had a way of muttering aloud everything he discovered: "Cyanosis, marked. Dead several hours. Scratches on face—"

CHURCH stood by the bed, studying the carpetless flooring. He was a large man, growing slightly gray on the temples and more than a bit stout. His eyes, for all the grief they had witnessed, were still cheerful. He had developed leg-muscles and self-confidence in the Fourth Ward, in the days when a patrolman hadn't even a uniform, only a badge and a club and a prayer; and now he was back again in civilian clothes as a detective. For this work he received a small raise in salary and his share of snickers.

Under a table at the head of the bed he found a pair of scissors. There was blood on one blade, though the only marks on Jenny's body were the shallow scratches on her face. Near the bed he discovered a little rubble of cigar-ash. It was scattered, as if the smoker had let the cigar drop here.

"Somebody," he grunted, "knows where the good cigars are. That ash is as white as bone." He hadn't seen an ash like that in six months. Crop failures in the South, and a shortage of Havanas, had brought cigar-smokers to dark days.

He asked the landlady when she had seen the girl last.

"Two or three days ago," Mrs. Garrity told him. "But I heard her going in and out every day. And I'd hear her and her friends in here at night, laughing and carrying on like fools."

"Gentlemen?"

Mrs. Garrity crossed her skinny arms. "Well, detective, she worked in a millinery shop. Girls that work in millinery shops don't live in up-to-date rooms like this one. I dare say some gentleman knows who paid the rent."

She probably was telling the truth, Church knew. Even a dingy, airless room in Ludlow Street was above most shopgirls, with their fifty-cents-a-day earnings. He asked: "Do you know any of her friends by name?"

"No sir. She had only one or two lately. Except there was a new one that came this morning. A ship's captain. I let *him* know this was no Sailor's Snug Harbor! Asking for *Missus* Thomas! He went in, but I dare say he didn't stay two minutes. Even Jenny drew the line."

"Did she have any visitors last night?"

"Well, yes—I heard a doctor leave her room just after the eleven-o'clock watch. 'That will fix you up, young woman,' he said. 'But don't be drinking swan gin on an empty stomach any more!'"

Church began to inventory the dead girl's possessions. When he glanced over the list, one thing surprised him. Poor, Jenny Thomas may have been; but she had possessed luxuries far above the Sixth Ward. There were a small mother-of-pearl box, a picture worked in peacock's feathers, five bottles of French perfume, a packet of China tea. On several of the articles he found an embossed gilt seal which read: *"South Seas House. New York."*

THERE was, in addition to these, a small sheaf of letters addressed to Mrs. Evan Thomas, in Bloomingdale. They were all from a Captain Evan Thomas, aboard the brig *Philadelphia,* at sea. In a bottom drawer, under some clothing, he found a fold of currency. He counted it; he counted it again.

"Look here!" he said to Dr. Lucas. "Two hundred and thirty-seven dollars!"

Dr. Lucas had looked long on the sordid side of life. He smiled cynically at Mrs. Garrity. "You say she had gentleman friends?"

"Enough, apparently! I dare say she couldn't have made that much in a year."

Tom Church put the letters, the money, and the trinkets in a pillow-slip. He made a last tour of the room. "Whenever you're ready, Doctor," he said finally.

Dr. Lucas was wrapping the girl's body in a blanket. "Call a hack," he said.

They laid the bundle across the floor of the hackney-cab and started uptown.

"Funny about the tea," Church said, after a moment.

"What tea?"

"There was a package of China tea on the table. Now, where would a girl like Jenny Thomas—"

The district surgeon stared at him. "Deliver me!" he said sardonically, and turned his face to the window.

AFTER that, Church stared out his own window and kept his own thoughts. Even a police surgeon like Lucas was inclined to sniff at scientific crime-detection. People forgot that this was 1857, that the whole nation was in an upsurge of science; man's brain had liberated his back from a thousand enslaving tasks. But when it came to law-enforcement, they were still back in the old days of watch-and-ward. If the thief was not caught with his hand in the till, the tendency was to forget about it.

But Tom Church knew that if you assembled enough molehills, you had a mountain. What about the tea and the mother-of-pearl box, for instance? What about the two hundred and thirty-seven dollars? Jenny Thomas had not been a street-walker—she had held a job; and anyway, street-walkers did not make that kind of money.

But then, he recalled, there was her husband, and yet none of the letters had mentioned enclosing any money. They were all stilted and self-conscious, the letters of a sea-captain who had no thought beyond the caprices of the weather and of his ship, and who signed himself, *"Your husb., Evan Thomas."* The envelopes bore the dogged rubric: "Evan Thomas, Master, Brig *Philadelphia."*

Well, this was a starting point. In the spiteful drizzle, Church left Sixth Ward station. A clerk in the harbormaster's office opened the Arrivals ledger for him. His finger stopped at the top of the third to the last page.

"'Brig *Philadelphia,* May 7,'" he read. "'Master, Evan Thomas.' But I wouldn't wait dinner on him," he added with a grin. "She's flying the

yellow flag, suspected of cholera. The last ship in from San Juan was rotten with it."

"You mean," Church said, "that no one has been ashore?"

"And won't be for forty days!"

There was no other Captain Thomas on the books. This left Church the unpleasant task of learning whether or not Thomas was still aboard ship.

HE took the Staten Island ferry, and debarked at Castleton in mid-afternoon. Behind the town were the new brick pest-houses about which the citizenry was raising such a cry. Offshore stood the *Philadelphia,* seaworn and wet, a yellow quarantine flag hanging limp from a forestay.

A grizzled lobsterman agreed to row the detective to within speaking-distance for a dollar. In a snub-nosed dory they thrust across the gray water of the bay. They approached another rowboat in their path whose owner was casting for junk. He let them pass, and then the dragnet splashed again just astern of them.

The lobsterman rested on his oars. "Far as we go, mate."

It was the distance of a long shout, but Church cupped his hands and succeeded in bringing to the rail a square-set figure in black jacket and trousers. "Sergeant Church, Metropolitan Police," he announced. "Would you be good enough to call the captain?"

"You're talking to him," the other man shouted; "but if you're from the police, the only favor you'll find here is a bucket of slops amidships. I'll talk to you when this damned yellow flag comes down!"

Church thought, *For a sea-captain, he talks like a fool.* But he said patiently: "You must understand, Captain, that the quarantine laws are for the good of the city."

The master leaned on the rail. "For the good of someone, yes," he agreed, "and I could tell you who. But there's no more cholera aboard this brig than there is in your back yard. We haven't been within two hundred miles of San Juan!"

Church had the quick warm tingle a hunting dog must experience when he flushes game. To the lobsterman, he said: "Another dollar if you'll row me closer."

The lobsterman pocketed the money. He brought the dory alongside. Close up, the master appeared to be in his forties, his face as brown and hard-looking as the leather visor of his cap. His beard was crisp and blond, and followed the line of his jaws.

"Perhaps," said Church, "we can make a trade. If your log bears you out, I'll see what's to be done toward putting you ashore. But in return I want a plain answer to a plain question."

Thomas stared down at him. "That's a fair bargain." He disappeared. The junkman, drifting close, made a great clatter by pulling in a rusty contraption resembling an old ship's-lantern.

Then the captain came back to lower, by a line, a fat volume which Church laid on the thwart.

"Now, then," he said, "why would anyone want to keep you from going ashore?"

"A little matter of supply and demand," returned the other. "If you're a cigar man, you'll know that New York hasn't a cigar worth setting fire to. I had the news in Havana, so I loaded up with all the good tobacco I could buy. But a certain gentleman has cornered what decent smoking is left in the city, and he can't afford to let me unload until he's made his profit. So it's cheaper for him to cross the proper palms with silver. For your information, his name's Hawes, of South Seas House."

"Is this guesswork?"

"No sir! I had it in a letter from my wife. His warehouse is supposed to be full of Havanas that he's selling as dear as diamonds."

Tom Church asked carefully: "Your wife lives in the city?"

Thomas nodded. "In Bloomingdale, up-island."

"If it's as you say," Church declared, "I'll speak to the Health Commission. And now, maybe you'll tell me this: How long were you ashore this morning?"

Captain Thomas did not stir. "I've been telling you I haven't been ashore since I left Cuba."

"Then how was it that a man answering to your description was asking for a Mrs. Thomas in Ludlow Street?"

Thomas began to look grave. "There's something wrong, here," he said.

It put Church in a corner, but he said what he had to. "I'm sorry if I'm the first to bring you this news, Captain; but there is indeed something wrong. Your wife has been murdered. From the landlady's testimony, it seems that you might have visited her about the time she died."

Thomas' hand passed over his face. He said falteringly: "This is—I don't quite understand, sir—"

Church repeated it. "It's very sad, Captain, and I wouldn't trouble you, except for—"

Thomas was still staring down at the dory, but he wasn't seeing him. "Will you do what you can," he asked, "about clearing my ship? I'll talk to you later. I—I don't think I can— You understand?" He vanished from the rail.

When they pulled away, the junkman was standing in the stern of his boat, trying to raise the dragnet.

It was dusk when Tom Church reached Manhattan again. The rain had cleared off, but a gray ceiling pressed down on the island, and the cobbles glistened in early gaslight. He bought hot buttered corn from a girl, and ate as he walked.

He felt sorry for the Captain; he seemed an honest and sincere man. But unless Jenny Thomas had had other sailor friends, he had been lying about not having been ashore.

There was time for one more small excursion tonight. In about an hour the shops of Manhattan would release their underfed pigeon-chested army of clerks and shopgirls. He might, before then, sift the place Jenny Thomas had worked, for a lead or two.

He found the Gotham Hat Works in an old frame building near South Street. A bay window infringed on the sidewalk; behind it he saw work-tables and shelves, and three women bent over half-finished work.

Mrs. Emma Flynn, who operated the shop, was a bony woman with a long nose and a smudge of dark hairs on her upper lip. She was treadling a sewing-machine when the bell over the door tinkled. Two girls sat at tables, stitching breakfast-caps, and on the tilted shelves along the left wall was displayed a variety of millinery.

TOM CHURCH held his high-crowned derby against his stomach. He introduced himself. He said: "I suppose the unfortunate news—"

Mrs. Flynn said: "Yes." She continued to hold a ruffle of ribbon under the foot of the machine. "What do you want?"

"Just a bit of information," Church told her. "It may possibly save both of us some trouble. Strange as it may seem, the law requires you to answer correctly anything I may ask you relative to the death of Jenny Thomas."

Mrs. Flynn laid the work aside. "Does it, now?" Her smile said he would get nothing here worth carrying away.

Church walked past the bonnets on the shelves. He picked one up and abstractedly inspected it. "What was Jenny's work, Mrs. Flynn?"

"Capmaker."

"Did you know any of her friends? The men she knew?"

Mrs. Flynn hesitated. "Well—I dare say she had a many, but they came and went. Right now it's Harry Burritt, from Mr. Hawes'. There'll be a long face for you! He'll have to find somebody else to walk home and spend his money on!"

Church put the bonnet down again. "Hawes—would that be Hawes, of South Seas House?"

Mrs. Flynn selected a spool of green ribbon, and threaded a needle. "He's the only Hawes *I* know, and he's enough! He charges for his silk as though the Emperor's own silkworms had spun it!"

"I don't suppose," Church said, "that you would have known Jenny's husband?"

The way the girls at their tables looked up told Church he had cracked a nut with meat in it. "In a way," Emma Flynn said. "He's a ship-captain. He was in this morning, looking for Jenny. I think," she added, "that he left a paper of some kind."

She found it under a pile of scraps, a wrinkled envelope addressed to Captain Thomas, with a return address in Bloomingdale. "Seems as though he couldn't find her at the old address," she said. "She was still using it for mail, though, and picking letters up there. It's almost like she was hiding from him! I gave him the new address, and he copied it down, and forgot this when he left."

CHURCH kept the envelope. He turned, as the bell over the door jingled. A man in a brown linsey-woolsey suit and a heavy jacket came in. He carried a gunnysack over his shoulder. He was about forty-five, with a swarthy handsomeness that gin was eradicating; his hair was curly, and his eyes were dark, but bloodshot.

Looking at him, remembering him, Church knew he had his hand in a tangle of threads like a spider-web. Somewhere there was a radial point; somewhere there was a connection between them all—Hawes and Jenny Thomas and this grubby hat-shop; for the man in the door was the scavenger who had been casting his net beside the brig two hours ago, while Church talked to Captain Thomas.

"Well, Flynn!" Mrs. Flynn said. "has it taken you all day to bring home such a handful as that?"

Flynn grunted, passed her and opened a door in the rear to throw the sack through. It landed on a dirt floor several steps below shop-level. He sat down, rubbed his hands together, and stared at Church.

"This gentleman," Emma Flynn told him, "is a detective, come about Jenny."

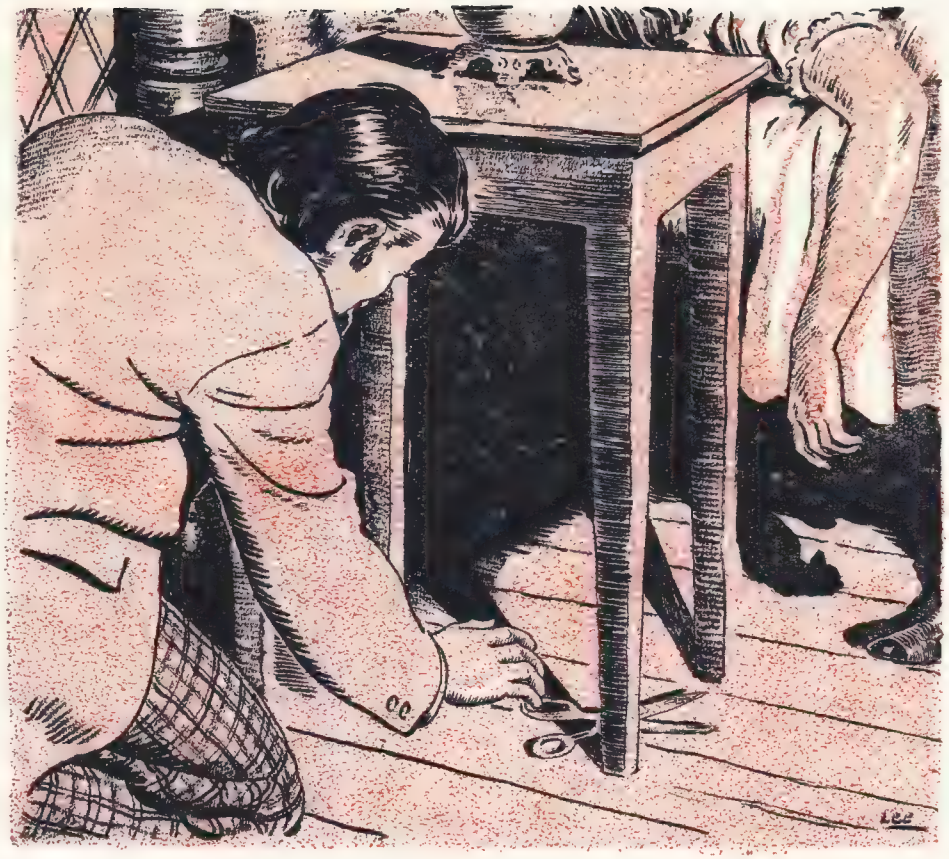
"What about Jenny?" Flynn's face did not admit that he had ever seen Tom Church before.

"Dead," Mrs. Flynn said. "Murdered!"

Flynn slowly sat up. "Murdered! *Jenny?*"

"A terrible thing," said Mrs. Flynn, but her eyes were wickedly bright. "She was such a pretty little chit. We shall miss her, sha'n't we?"

There was one thing about women, thought Church: Their emotions



There was blood on one blade . . . and shallow scratches on Jenny's body.

tricked them into saying things they would not have put into writing. He had a whole history, now, of jealousy and suspicion, of kisses stolen behind doors, or merely imagined by a woman who was not young and not pretty any more.

Flynn sat with his elbows on his knees, thumbnail digging at a callus; and just then the front door opened again, and a young man in a claw-hammer coat, with an unbrushed silk hat, poked his head in to say: "Pardon, ma'am. Mr. Hawes says, will there be any hats tonight?"

Mrs. Flynn's cheeks burned, but she kept the treadle rocking. She said: "No. Not tonight."

"But he said you promised—"

"Tell him I'm sorry! This thing of Jenny put me behind. And then there are the police to entertain—detectives, and all."

"Detectives—" The young man's eyes found Church. "Yes, I suppose there would be. Well, good evening, Mrs. Flynn. I'll tell Mr. Hawes."

He closed the door briskly, and his tall form passed the shop-window.

Mrs. Flynn remarked dryly: "That was Burritt, Jenny's young man."

"So I judged," Church said. Presently he too started toward the door. "I'm sorry to have troubled you," he told Mrs. Flynn. "But I have to bother a lot of wrong people to find the right." Then he picked up one of the bonnets from the display shelf.

"Forgive my masculine ignorance, ma'am. All I truly know of millinery is what Mrs. Church's bonnets cost me. But I wasn't aware that mull had been used for several years."

"When you're as busy as we are," snapped Mrs. Flynn, "you can't always keep your display shelves up to the minute. All our hats are sold wholesale, anyway."

"Of course!" Church said goodnight, nodded to Mr. Flynn, and went out. He was smiling to himself as he started home. *Yes ma'am,* he thought, *you doubtless keep very busy indeed. But I suspect it isn't with hats!*

IN the morning he took a four-cent omnibus to 106th Street. Here commerce defiled the pure air of Harlem with the odors of Indian rubber factories, breweries and tanneries. Hawes' place appeared no grimier nor less grimy than the rest, a two-story brick structure with a gateway at the left by which drays might enter and leave the warehouse.

Clerks were already busy, their fingers scuttling over accounts and copybooks. Behind a railing, a little army of women was packaging and labeling merchandise. Farther back was a corner walled off by waist-high wainscoting topped by windows. Church was not surprised to see, working just outside the door of this cubicle, the young man in the claw-hammer coat who had come to Flynn's about the

bonnets for Mr. Hawes. But he passed by him to knock at the door.

Mr. Hawes was a precociously stout gentleman who left his desk to greet the visitor. He put much of his weight on a stout snakewood cane; Church could sympathize with a lame man of his avoirdupois. Mr. Hawes wore a frock coat with a cream-colored waistcoat; his face was pink and pouched. When Church mentioned Captain Thomas, he slapped his thigh and went into wheezy laughter.

"Ah, poor old Thomas!" he chuckled. "Yes, I might have had something to do with the cholera story. But it's quite all right, now; I have sold my stock well. You may release him, with my best wishes!"

He balanced his cane against the desk as he sat down; Church saw it falling, and reached forward to catch it. He said, holding it an instant: "Of course you realize that charges can be pressed—"

Back of the merry little eyes was shrewdness. "I don't believe Captain Thomas will make me any trouble. You see, there is the matter of a ton of sugar he sold me one time which was so weevilly I had to let it go to a candy-maker, at a loss. . . . We're old friends, Thomas and I."

He reached to open a cabinet on the desk and offer cigars. "Take several, detective. You won't find these on the market, I'll vow. A gentleman's cigar, from the Vuelta Abaja."

Church brazenly took six. He lighted one and let his taste-buds revel in the benediction of the warm smoke. Then he said: "Oh, yes—I thought these might mean something to you—" He began to take a number of articles out of his pocket which he laid before the importer.

HAWES picked up the packet of China tea. "Where did you get these?"

"In the room of Jenny Thomas, who was murdered yesterday morning."

Hawes grunted. "I heard about Jenny. A shame; such a pretty girl. You know," he said, "it's very curious about these. Generally, a retailer would have substituted his stamp for mine, or at least have added his. We never sell tea, by the way, in amounts this small. Someone packaged this from the bulk, and closed it with my seal. I am wondering if one of my clerks hasn't been making her gifts, at my expense."

Through the open door, Church watched Burritt's neck redden. "It seems possible," he remarked. "Did you know the girl?"

"She used to bring an order, occasionally, from Flynn's hat-shop."

"But you don't deal in hats yourself?"

Illustrated by Manning de V. Lee

Hawes had his pistol in his hand, crying out: "You damned thieves!

Hawes looked at him, steadily. "I have. There's no profit in them. I don't handle any at present."

Church stood. "I think that's all, then. No, don't get up," he said. "I may visit you again, sir. Good day."

He stopped at Burritt's desk and appropriated a sheet of foolscap. He dipped a steel pen and wrote slantwise across the page: *"The Hen and Chickens, at twelve."* He said, "Thank you," and departed, leaving the foolscap on the desk.

The Hen and Chickens was a chop-house in lower Harlem, where a man with Church's appetite could lunch well for thirteen cents, beer included. Burritt arrived a little after the hour. He took the other seat in the booth.

His skin was moist; a little colony of pimples on his chin stood out. "I don't understand this at all, sir," he declared.

Church picked up his cutlet. "Shall we be hanged for a thief or a murderer?" he asked.

Burritt gripped the edge of the table. "Sir, I would appreciate—"

Church laid down the cutlet and wiped his fingers. "Of course," he said. "My reasoning is somewhat in this direction: That, according to Mrs. Flynn's testimony, you were Jenny Thomas' current lover. That many of the more valuable objects in her room came from South Seas House. It is my guess that you stole them."

Harry Burritt's amber-colored eyes closed. His narrow chest took a shallow breath. Resolution and defiance were deserting him; when he opened

I'll teach you to come robbing and pilfering!"

his eyes again, they looked down at his clenched hands, resting on the table.

"A thief, yes," he said. "But not a murderer. Believe me!"

"Is there," Church asked him, "such a difference? A man steals to please a girl; he trades his honesty and peace of mind for her kisses. And then he finds she is already married, that he had played the fawning poodle for nothing, and for a moment the poodle becomes a mastiff, biting, snarling, killing—"

Burritt looked as though he were strangling. "I swear—"

"You needn't. I can't prove a word I'm saying. But when I take a trail, young man, I don't easily lose it."

Burritt hesitated a moment and then declared fervently: "I'll tell you all I know about her. I was in love with Jenny, yes. I met her at Mr. Hawes' about six months ago. She loved to get presents, and I—I got to stealing. If I didn't bring something one week she would pout; she'd talk about the other men who wanted to marry her."

"She had others?"

"I used to see Flynn walking her home when she had worked late. Maybe it didn't mean anything; she said it didn't. But I've caught her in lies before. The last time I saw her was the night before she was killed. I'd walked her home, but she wouldn't let me come in. Tired, she said. And then the next day I heard about it."

Church drank deeply of his beer and wiped his mouth. "Did it ever strike you as strange," he asked, "that Mr. Hawes should handle ladies' bonnets?"

Burritt shrugged. "We handle almost anything."

Church signified, by wiping his mouth and pushing away his plate, that the dinner and the questioning were over. "Just remember," he said, "that I shall regard it as eminently suspicious if you change lodgings or leave the city. If you try to run away, I'll have you in Tombs before you reach Stryker's Bay."

Burritt was too emotionally wrung out to do more than swallow. "All right," he said. "All right."

Tom Church was on the South Street wharf when the brig *Philadelphia* was brought to the dock. As soon as the plank was run out, he boarded her, to find Captain Thomas putting a gang to work in the holds. Thomas had a hard handshake for him. But Church said regretfully: "It's hard lines, Captain, to have to lay by another week. But there is some difficulty. Mr. Hawes has been properly reprimanded; but the Health Commission thinks you should wait seven days before unloading. Saving face, I suppose."

The Captain swore. "And a copper-bound crew eating the profits of the trip as fast as their jaws'll wag! They should have been paid off a week ago."

"You and the crew," said Church, "are at liberty to go ashore when you like. You can pay the men off today." Then he added, with a sidewise smile, "Any sugar this trip, Captain?"

Thomas chuckled. "Ay, he told you that, did he? Well, he was of age; and in this business a merchant wants a sharp eye in his head."

"Caveat emptor," said the detective. "Well, good luck, Captain. Oh, yes—there was this, that you left at Mrs. Flynn's. You might want to keep it."

Captain Thomas was still staring at the wrinkled envelope when Church went down the gangplank.

His trade, Tom Church thought, was not unlike lobstering. You baited your trap with care, set it down on the sand as nicely as possible, but after that, you could do nothing but wait with as much patience as possible.

He did not leave the harbor district until he saw the crew of the *Philadelphia* swing down South Street to their long-awaited pleasures, to the whisky and soft arms waiting to solace and fleece them. He wandered the dusk-softened streets until night, hearing the cries of shad- and clam-vendors, the clattering progress of a tinker with his pack.

Over a glass of spruce beer he tested, in his mind, the cords he was holding. He thought of Mrs. Flynn, with

her out-of-date bonnets and the backward air of her shop. And her husband, with his dragnet and his dory, quietly working the waters where the big ships lay, watching and listening. And poor Harry Burritt, with the soul of a rabbit but the desires and passions of a man. And Mr. Horace Hawes, with his mysterious dealings with the Flynn family.

BY midnight Harlem had turned out the lights of its shops, thrown its slops into the streets and gone to bed. But in South Seas House someone still worked, the small light of a lamp just touching the windows. Church stood in a doorway across the street.

He had had five beers on the way uptown, and it was making him sleepy. He roused groggily when the church clock at Dominie Hook sounded two. It was not long after this that a solitary dray came up the street. Church made out a man on the driver's seat, and someone else who stood in back among a load of boxes.

The dray stopped before South Seas House. The one in back went to open the warehouse gate. He watched the dray move into the dark interior, and then quickly walked to the business entrance of the building and rapped. Through a window he could see Mr. Hawes leave his office and limp to the front. Then he saw the big revolving pistol in his hand. Hawes was taking no chances this time of night.

The door opened a crack. Hawes squinted out.

"Who is it?" he asked.

"Detective Church. Do you realize you are being robbed?"

Hawes gasped: "What?"

"I've been watching your warehouse for two hours. Just now a dray pulled in to it. What's the matter with your watchman?"

"We'll soon see!" Hawes admitted Church and started off down the room, stopping to secure the lamp. Church had taken a locust-wood club from under his coat. They descended a short flight of stairs and followed a long gloomy hallway. They came to a turn, beyond which light gleamed under the crack of a door.

Hawes snuffed out the lamp, grunting as he stooped to place it on the floor.

After an instant the door flew open, giving Church a view of a big cluttered store-room. The dray was halted directly in front of the door. At the tail-gate, Flynn and his wife were handling a load of battered wicker boxes.

Hawes had his pistol in his hand. He was going through the door as fast as a lame man could move, and he was crying out: "You damned thieves! I'll teach you to come robbing and pilfering!"

Flynn stood befuddled in the back of the dray. Mrs. Flynn's hands were upraised to receive a crate. Church had not expected quite so much speed from a fat man. He had to step out, the club swinging, to reach Hawes before the gun went off. Even so, the pistol filled the whole room with its thunder just as he cracked down on Hawes' forearm. The bullet struck the stone floor and went wailing off to finish against a wall.

Flynn jumped down from the dray. Church reached the door an instant ahead of him. He stood with his back to it. Flynn's hand went to his belt, and a knife came out. When his arm went back, Church knew he was going to have to go back to his Fourth Ward tactics.

The club shot out like a sword, punching Flynn in the belly. Flynn grunted, making his throw quickly and wildly. Church came into range, measuring the force he put into the club-swing. A little too hard, and you had a corpse on your hands. Not hard enough was worse. He thought, from the sound of it, that this was just about right.

Flynn took a step forward, reached out as though to grapple him, and collapsed.

Mrs. Flynn, burly, mustached, terrified, started blindly for the door; and with fine sagacity Church stepped aside. Let the wagon handle the ladies, he liked to say. When he turned back, Hawes was on his knees, groping for the gun, but Tom Church hurried to recover it from under the dray and tuck it in his belt. Hawes pulled himself up. In the lamplight, his pink face was wild.

"Why did you stop me?" he demanded. "If a few of these sneak-thieves were killed, we might have fewer robberies. A man scrimps and saves, and then—"

"And then," said Church, "a little chit like Jenny Thomas comes along and threatens to expose him for buying stolen goods. I don't wonder she ended as she did!"

HAWES' face became less hysterical. His pudgy lips pressed together. "Do I understand, sir—"

"Sit down, Mr. Hawes," Church said. "That leg must bother you considerably. A pair of scissors makes an ugly wound."

"This is beyond me!" Hawes declared. "My leg—it's something chronic. Are you implying that I—that Jenny—"

"I'm implying," Church said, "that you killed her, Mr. Hawes. That she knew the Flynns sold only enough hats to keep the police from knowing that their real business was harbor piracy. They stole from the ships and sold the cream to you. Jenny didn't come here with orders. She came to ask for money to keep her from going to the police. She wasn't a nice girl, but clever, and even courageous, in a way. That last night, when you went to her room, she realized that what you had brought this time was really a noose, rather than money. But the best she could do was to stab you in the leg with the scissors. And then you went out, letting the landlady think you were a doctor."

Hawes desperately held his eyes. He said: "I've bought from the Flynns, yes. Tonight it was Captain Thomas' tobacco. Flynn was so sure there was no risk, with the crew all discharged. But I didn't kill the girl! Perhaps Flynn, or even his wife. . . . I suppose you knew Flynn and Jenny were lovers?"

"I assumed; I didn't know. Just as I assumed that because of your limp you were the one whose blood was on the scissors, back in Jenny's room. I added to this the fact that you were clumsy with your cane, even dropping it once. And then your boot— A chronically lame man, one who walks with his foot splayed out as you do, doesn't wear his boots evenly. Yours should be badly worn on the outside; but it is worn as evenly as mine."

FOR a moment Hawes was silent, and then he began to nod. "I see. I see." He was perspiring, but the tension had gone out of him. This was the moment, Church well knew, when a man either broke, pleading, cajoling, or accepted what was inevitable. He watched closely as Hawes picked up one of the wicker cases and broke the wrappings.

But Hawes was merely taking a mahogany cabinet of cigars out of the package. He was saying thoughtfully:

"I—I'm sorry about Jenny, detective. But after it was started, I knew how it must end. She never intended to protect me. She meant to have all she could out of me before she told the police. It's the old story: When it comes to business, a woman seldom behaves like a gentleman."

He offered the cigars. "Havanas! It's on Captain Thomas, this time." And he smiled.

Well, it might be stolen goods, but the gesture was just as generous. Church bit the end off one and lighted it. He filled his mouth with the smoke and blew it gently at the lamp. It was as sweet as hickory; it was smooth and rich.

"Mr. Hawes," he said, "you may be a poor judge of blackmailers, but you never go wrong on a cigar." But just the same, remembering Jenny Thomas, Tom Church did not dally long about producing the manacles.

My Most Amusing Experience

Conditions governing contributions for this department are the same as those for "What Do You Think?" —page 79

The Ticket

I COULDN'T help but notice the grin on the sheriff's face as he slowly and deliberately wrote me out a traffic-violation slip for going forty miles an hour in a twenty-mile zone.

I tried my best to plead with him. I explained that I was the new mail orderly for the M.P. detachment stationed some ten miles out of town, and that I was in a hurry to get the mail to the post office on schedule; but his hand never faltered.

"Look, Sheriff," I said, "this ticket will mean losing my position as mail orderly, my driver's license and probably a week's restriction to camp. Can't you forget the whole thing this time?"

"Son," he said as he handed me the traffic citation, "it won't be as bad as all that. Just follow the instructions on the ticket, and everything will be all right."

"Thanks, for nothing," I said, and snatched the ticket from his hand and crumpled it into my pocket. . . .

I felt my legs tremble as I neared the Commanding Officer's desk.

"Sir, I—er—well, sir, I believe this ticket will explain better than I can."

I watched him closely as he examined the ticket. Suddenly I saw a puzzled look on his face.

"If this is some sort of joke," said the C.O. as he handed the ticket back to me, "I don't get it!"

I examined the ticket, and to my amazement, the page—with the exception of the printed matter—was a total blank; but on the reverse side was this message scrawled in longhand:

Come up for dinner sometime. Preferably this Wednesday evening. Ma makes the best apple pie in the country. It will melt in your mouth. Ask for Sheriff's house. —*J. B.*

Pfc. W. A.

The Javelinas

SOME years ago when I was superintendent of schools in a small city of the Southwest, there was an assembly of all the faculty and the students to decide upon a mascot.

Several suggestions were made, but one of the football-players and school leaders favored giving that honor to the javelina—a native of the region and a good fighter. What was more, said the javelina advocate, this animal believed in teamwork, for javelinas always travel and fight in groups and stick by each other to the last.

The football coach was pleased with the teamwork idea; and when he had so spoken, the decision was made unanimous.

I located a pair of javelinas, already tamed, and their owner donated them to the school when he learned for what purpose they were wanted.

The little mascots quickly rooted their way into the affections of everybody on the campus. A pen was built near the main building for them; but they were so gentle and popular with faculty and students alike, that before long they were roaming over the campus at will. Students petted them; faculty members scratched their backs; and even the dignified superintendent —I—took notice of them. They paraded between halves at football games; and several times they visited classes—with the full approval of the students, if not of the teachers. In a short time three offspring appeared, and inside of two years there were seven or eight of the mascots.

But one day on the campus I saw one of the little animals rooting, and I reached over and picked him up.

My intentions were peaceful, if not loving; but that javelina baby did not so interpret them. He let out a squeal of terror—and all the other javelinas came toward me with their bristles up.

Now, anyone who has ever seen a grown javelina charging an enemy, will understand why I fled. Ordinarily he will not weigh over forty pounds, but with every hair on him standing out, he looks much larger and fiercer. And he has formidable tusks.

I was cut off from the building, and the only place of safety was a nearby tree. I climbed it with no delay, but those animals waited for me. Meanwhile, a crowd began to assemble; the spectacle of a dignified professor squatting in a tree was too much for them, and they began to laugh.

At first only a few saw me, but the word spread rapidly, and the crowd grew just as rapidly. And everybody who looked, laughed. Of course I got down, but folk kept laughing after I was down. They roared, then got to the back-slapping stage of hilarity.

Eventually I lived it down and was able to see the funny side of it, but it required some courage. Now, when an old-timer sees me and mentions the event, I can laugh as heartily as he.

The javelinas? Oh, we put them in a pen for keeps. I saw to that.

J. A. R.

"I Could Have Been Took Prisoner!"

I WAS talking to a second lieutenant in the courtyard of a home being used as a battalion CP in the shattered German city of Aachen, five days before the city surrendered. We were discussing the fluidity of the front and the confused street-to-street and house-to-house fighting. On the other side of a high fence could be heard sporadic bursts of small-arms and machine-gun fire, and with frequent regularity the louder *whoom* of our 155s and the explosions of enemy mortar shells. Just as a particularly vicious burst of machine-gun fire cut loose, a civilian newsreel camera-man came into the courtyard and sauntered over to us. He was wearing a tin hat and GI clothes, but no arms. On the shoulder of his left sleeve was a flash that read: *"Newsreel Photographer."*

"Since when did we begin using Jerry doctors in our First Aid stations?" he asked us.

"We don't," the lieutenant snapped.

"T'hell we don't! I just had one take care of me," said the newsreel man, showing us a bandaged finger.

"What in blue blazes are you talking about?" the lieutenant queried.

The camera-man then explained that he had been scouting the streets for a place to set up his camera for shots of the fighting, and while doing so, a mortar shell had burst near by, and a piece of it had smashed his finger. He had wandered around a bit until he saw a light in a cellar, and on peering in, had seen some GIs and several Jerry soldiers being treated for wounds. On entering, a Jerry doctor had shoved him unceremoniously in line, another treated the finger, and then the camera-man had been shoved back onto the street. From there he had come directly back to the Battalion CP where we were.

On this explanation, the lieutenant demanded: "Just where in hell was this first-aid station?"

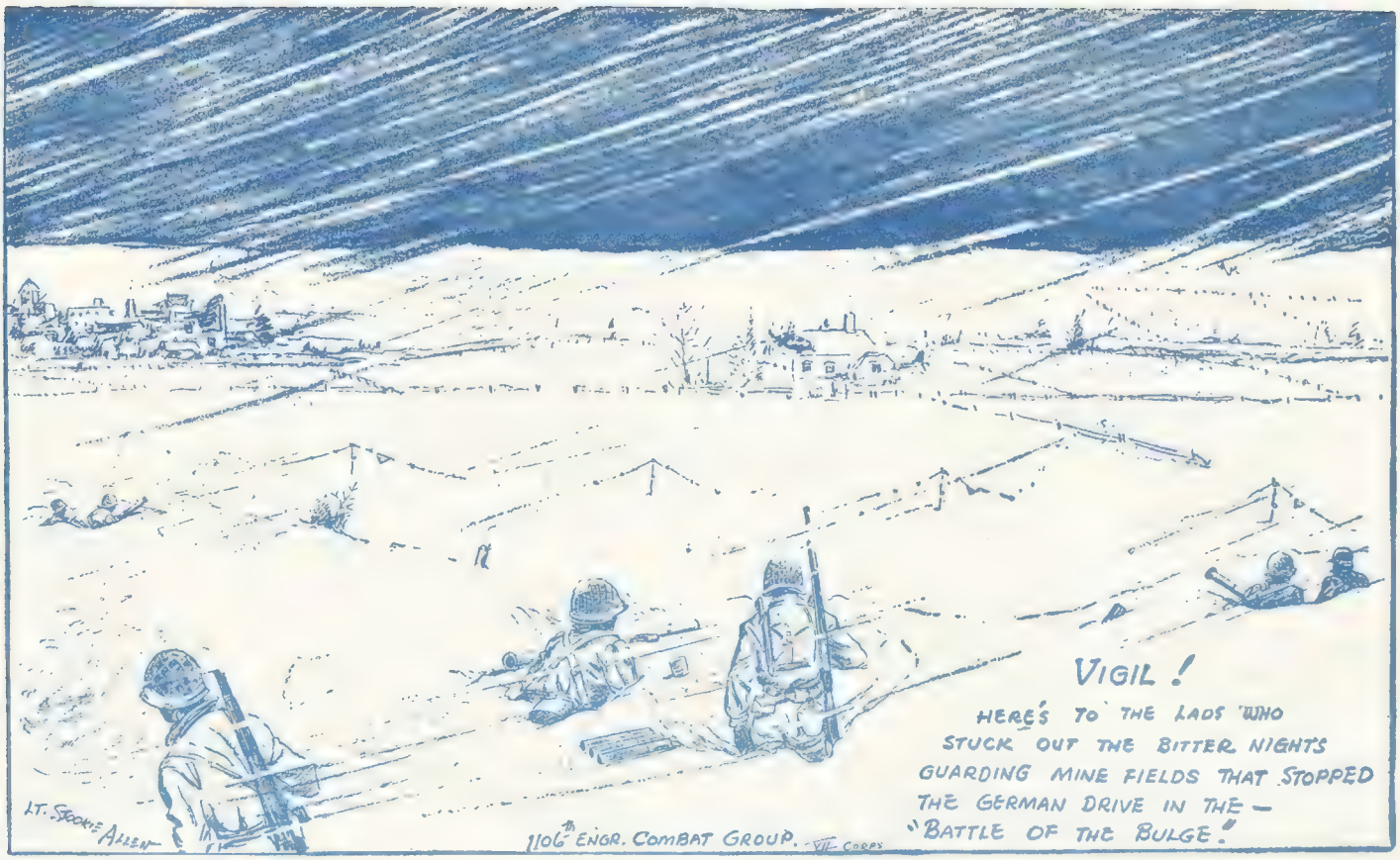
And when the camera-man answered, "Oh, over by what looked like a square with a big theater," the lieutenant shot back: "Man, you were inside the Jerry lines. That was the State Theater, and we haven't taken that area yet."

As his eyes bugged, the camera-man ejaculated: "My God! I could have been took prisoner!"

With that, the laugh that came from the lieutenant and I was the loudest either of us had enjoyed in a long time.

On discussing it later, we reasoned that because the camera-man was unarmed, yet dressed like a GI in combat clothes, the German doctors had taken him for a prisoner, which undoubtedly the other GIs being treated were.

Major Henry M. Fine, A.C.


VIGIL!
HERE'S TO THE LADS WHO STUCK OUT THE BITTER NIGHTS GUARDING MINE FIELDS THAT STOPPED THE GERMAN DRIVE IN THE — "BATTLE OF THE BULGE!"
LT. STOOKIE ALLEN
106th ENGR. COMBAT GROUP. VII CORPS

The Devil's Garden

Battlefield sketches by a combat engineer

by Lt. Stookie Allen

ON the cold, rainy morning of February 23, 1945, the Combat Engineers of the great First Army picked up their assault boats and moved down to the bank of the Roer River opposite Düren, Germany. They were joined in the darkness by the infantry from General Terry Allen's "Timberwolves."

A stinging rain was sweeping the Roer,

NOTE TELEPHONE LINES STRUNG ACROSS STATUE BY THE INFANTRY ON ITS WAY THROUGH DÜREN.

swollen from many days of floods, and dams blown out by the Nazis. Here began the hardest, cruelest river crossing of the Western Front.

The Germans had direct artillery and machine-gun fire zeroed in on crossing sites. Boats were blown to pieces and swept downstream. At one spot the engineers tried twenty-three times to throw an infantry support bridge across, before they succeeded.

Minefields were encountered. Every known device for blowing up men had been sown by the Germans. There were small Schu mines that tore off a foot. There were wood, concrete and plastic boxes filled with T.N.T. that mine-detectors would not detect, egg grenades, "potato mashers" and rockets fastened with trip wires. It was a devil's garden.

The crossing was finally made and the lads moved through the city of Düren. They saw the statue of Bismarck—about the only object still standing. It had been turned around by one of our artillery shells.

Bismarck had once faced the West; he now faced Germany!

It seemed to be an omen. From that morning the rout of the German Army was on. The First made its great push to the Rhine and joined the Third, which came up from the south. Thousands of prisoners were taken. The Germans were unable to get their forces across the Rhine —and in a few weeks the war was over.

("The Bridge Builders," another series by Lt. Allen, will appear in an early issue.)

Mr. Mayberry's Money

He wanted to give it away, and many were eager to help him.

by JERRY BRONDFIELD

IN case you're wondering why you haven't seen my stuff in the *Express* lately, it's because I was fired. That's right—*fired!* Me, the best, the brightest blamed feature-writer the sheet ever had!

Old Jim Kirby, the managing editor, bounced me right out on my ear. He was in a high dudgeon. You should see Kirby in a high dudgeon sometime. On him it looks horrible, but you know how it is when you wear something day after day. After a while it gets to be gruesome.

But enough about Jim Kirby. Let me tell you how it happened.

I've got Enoch Mayberry to thank for it. Almost from the day I started learning my way around this town, journalistically speaking, I had a strong hunch that Enoch Mayberry sooner or later was going to be a story.

Don't ask me how I knew. I just *knew*. I've got a nose for those things. That's why I'm the best, the brightest, the— Well, never mind.

Anyway, about thirty years ago, when Enoch Mayberry was a young man, he invented a new kind of egg-beater, or some such, and made himself a fortune.

But Enoch wasn't the kind of gent who worked himself into a lather over money and the advantages thereof. Just the opposite. Enoch was a small, shy, simple man with a pleasant, smiling face, and he went around patting kids on the head and giving them candy out of a bag he always carried. If he really owned two suits he was saving the second one for some celestial junior prom, because all you ever saw him in was a baggy brown cheviot.

Enoch never married and he lived alone, except for his housekeeper, in an immaculate big white house out on Waite Hill.

You couldn't call him queer, and you couldn't call him eccentric, but despite his money his idea of a big time was a fishing-trip over on Yellow Rapids Creek, or an occasional concert in town. It wasn't that Enoch was tight, but where money was concerned he had the strangest, most unpredictable mind in captivity. Ring his bell and ask for a contribution to

a worthy cause—and you never knew whether he'd hand you a quarter or write out a check for five thousand dollars. With Enoch it wasn't the cause; it was his whimsy.

Well, there I was one afternoon trying to wheedle a couple of baseball passes out of the sports department when I heard an excited yelp from the managing editor's office:

"Chandler—come here!"

I bounded over.

KIRBY was pacing his office excitedly, holding a letter in his hand. "Douglas just sent this down," he said. (Douglas was editor-in-chief of the *Express.*) "It's a letter from Enoch Mayberry," Kirby continued, slapping it noisily with his other hand. "And it's the hottest thing to reach this shop in years!"

It must have been all of that, because if Kirby were to pace just an ounce faster, it would be a full gallop.

"Enoch Mayberry," he rattled on, "says he wants to do some good for something or somebody and has fifty thousand dollars for the purpose. But he doesn't know what it is—" Kirby waved the letter triumphantly. "And he wants *us,* the *Express,* to help him! He wants us to publish his letter and have people send in suggestions, no holds barred, as to the best way he can spend the dough!

"But that isn't all," Kirby continued ecstatically. "To the person offering the best suggestion he will give an additional twenty-five thousand. Did you hear what I said? *An additional twenty-five grand!* Do you know what this story will do for us?"

The boss was long since out of breath, and that Wagnerian tenor of his had ebbed to a mere squeak. He just had enough breath left to add: "And what d'ya think this'll do to those melonheads over at the *Journal?* They'll crawl into their wastebaskets and expire from acute mortification!"

Kirby raised both fists like a cheerleader calling for a locomotive. "What a stroke of luck!" he croaked. "Mayberry could just as easily have picked them. He doesn't owe us nothin'." (The boss frequently got ungrammatical when he was excited.)

He was right, though, about the *Journal.* You never heard of two competing papers hating each other with as much enthusiasm. Everybody worked at it, from the publishers down to the office boys. It got downright silly at times: If the *Express* wanted to fire the manager of the local ball club, the *Journal* started comparing him to Frank Chance or John McGraw. If the *Journal* got behind a city bond issue, the *Express* screamed fraud.

Everybody on the two sheets gladly would spend the rest of his days writing obits for the opposition. Everybody, that is, except Judy Hollis and me.

Judy was tall and slender, with coppery red hair and big green eyes; and I could dwell on other salient virtues for a good half hour without repeating. She was, furthermore, one whale of a writer. There was one other small item: she also was the niece of Clem Brainard, the *Journal's* publisher.

Well, you can sort of guess what we were up against, because Judy and I quite definitely saw eye-to-eye on things, especially on *us,* and I might add that things were pretty much decided.

We'd been able to keep it on a somewhat secret basis, but it was getting toward the time for the deep plunge. All we had to do was figure a way for Judy to escape the falling timber and masonry, when the word reached Clem Brainard. That moment would tax the combined talents of Shakespeare, Tennyson and Kipling to describe.

And to complicate things, there was Jim Kirby waving that letter from Enoch Mayberry as though it contained Hirohito's last will and testament, which the *Express* alone would be allowed to print.

"Chandler," Kirby said, "I'm putting you on this thing. We'll start it tomorrow with a smash piece on Page One. We'll arrange with Mayberry to print excerpts from the more interesting suggestions as they come in. We'll keep it hot—burning hot—and set a three-week deadline. It's good enough to last that long. Better start with a good color piece on Mayberry."

Well, I'd never met Mayberry before, and I have to admit it was a bit of a surprise. He had a certain charm and warmth, but if you looked real close you could detect something that might warn you Enoch could be a little pixyish.

AFTER we settled on the contest details, Mayberry said: "I have instructed my bank to send your paper a statement indicating the money is at your disposal." He smiled. "This should all be great fun, should it not?"

"It should," I assured him. "But tell me, Mr. Mayberry," I said, "just between you and me, why did you select our paper for this, instead of the *Journal?*"

He gave me that abashed, Barry Fitzgerald sort of look. "Promise you won't mention it to a soul?"

I promised.

"Well," she said, "I just don't want you to do anything you'd be sorry for. And if you let all those people down—"

Illustrated by John Fulton

He smiled. "It's because of one of your comic strips—'Little Daisy.' I think she's wonderful."

"Oh," I said. That was all I *could* say. "Little Daisy" is a misguided little moron who couldn't happen to anybody, except the *Express*.

Well, I pinned Enoch down for the important facts in his life and times, and came away thinking that the color story Kirby wanted would be about as colorful as a treatise on crop rotation in Lapland. It would need a liberal application of the Chandler touch.

That night I met Judy for dinner, and afterward we went down to Dugan's Den for a drink and to catch a load of Barney Green's piano. After the third drink, I told her about Enoch Mayberry.

I could see her eyes widen and an expression around her mouth as though she were going to whistle, which she finally did.

"What a story!" she said, and then immediately clapped a hand to her forehead. "Oh, my Lord, what am I saying?" she almost shrieked. "You've got the thing sewed up exclusively! Ooooh, Bill! Uncle Clem—he'll throw three forms of fits!"

I nodded solemnly. "Uh-huh, I know." We sat there. Barney kept on playing. But from that point on, everything sounded like Chopin's funeral march. . .

The next day we had Enoch Mayberry plastered all over Page One—six columns wide with a two-line bold type head. There was a big picture of Enoch, of course, and a signed editorial by the big boss, Douglas himself, who sounded off on how honored the *Express* was to be chosen to cooperate with this magnificent and thrilling gesture by Mr. Mayberry.

REACTION? Brother! They'll be talking about it eighty-seven years hence. It had all the momentum of the Oklahoma land-rush, and was just as riotous.

People who hadn't written a letter in so long they didn't know the Pony Express had stopped running, suddenly grabbed up their goose-quills and unlimbered themselves of The Idea.

After all, did you ever know anyone who didn't have an idea how a chunk of money could be spent? And a big enough chunk, naturally, can prod the imagination to truly wondrous limits. Especially when there's an added cash incentive like the twenty-five grand that Enoch was tossing in.

Well, as I said before, I was assigned to do the daily blow-by-blow progress. Each day we printed a stripped-down version of some of the more interesting ideas. Some, of course, were really fired with the desire to do something good for the city, like a new community nursery for the kids, or a new bathhouse at the beach.

Some of the others (oh, those others!) were gems. One guy suggested the money be spent to buy the ball club a new first baseman, so they could send that clown Joe Goss and his two left feet back to the bush leagues where he belonged. (Well, he *had* something there!) And one dame thought the funds should set up a

"Uncle Clem's never," she said, "been anything but sweet to me." "He—sweet!" I jeered. "Why, he couldn't even spell the word!"

permanent peanut supply for the pigeons on Lamont Square, so the poor birds wouldn't have to depend on an indifferent public. . . . Which is all the proof you need that some people definitely could not qualify as Governor of the Bank of England.

In a week the *Express* circulation jumped three thousand, and if it weren't for the newsprint shortage we could have tripled it. Well, in a two-newspaper town, when one sheet gains the other loses. And we didn't need a secret agent to tell us the collective disposition at the *Journal* office was something to contemplate—at a distance, though, because it would curdle a bottle of milk if you carried it by on the same side of the street.

We had reports that Clem Brainard, on the day we broke the story, was torn between two desires: (1) to murder Enoch Mayberry with a dull knife, and (2) to murder Enoch Mayberry by slow poison.

As a newspaperman, I should have felt better than I did. I wasn't exactly doing myself an irreparable harm by handling the best story in years, and after the first week I was about the second most important guy in town.

Enoch, naturally, outranked me, but I was the ringmaster, the gent snapping the whip over the wild-animal act. It should have been a cozy sort of feeling, but somehow I was uneasy, as though I knew the act would get out of hand, and those wild animals suddenly would climb up on their hindlegs and snarl: "Okay, bud, this is where you get off!"

And then I knew what it was, or at least I thought I did: It was Judy. First she broke a luncheon appointment. Then for our regular Friday-night date she said she was tired and wanted to stay home and go to bed early that night. So when I bumped into her on Main Street the following day and she tore away hurriedly as though I'd just broken out with leprosy, I was sure something was up.

I don't intend to deliver a dissertation on women, but I know dames well enough to know that you don't know 'em. The smartest, the most wonderful (and need I tell you that's Judy?) can whip into a tailspin, and there isn't a board of inquiry in the world that wouldn't have to render a verdict of "causes unknown," when the crash came.

Except in Judy's case you might have blamed it on osmosis. After all, being surrounded by those lame-brains at the *Journal* and soaking up the malarkey her uncle Clem Brain-

ard dispensed wasn't going to leave her unscarred forever. What with *l'affaire Mayberry* adding to the chaos, some of that screwloose *Journal* reasoning was bound to seep through and affect her, sooner or later.

Well, I am nothing if not a man of action, so I phoned her and said she should meet me after work at Dugan's. I made it sound mysterious so at least she would show up.

SHE showed up, all right, and I was nudged off balance a bit because she wore that special smile she always reserved for me only.

But even so, I guess I had a right to be a little suspicious, so after we'd had a couple of drinks I said: "Look, honey, this Mayberry thing isn't getting under your skin too, is it?" Straight out, just like that.

"Of course not, silly," she answered. "Whatever makes you think that?"

I mentioned our two broken dates and the way she had dashed off after meeting on the street.

She waved her hand airily. "Pure happenstance, darling, dictated by more pressing priorities of the moment."

I sipped my drink moodily and watched Barney Green's hands caress the piano. "Just as long," I said, "as it isn't dictated by that uncle of yours."

"Uncle Clem," she replied, "never dictates. He's never been anything but sweet to me."

"He—sweet!" I jeered. "Why, he couldn't even spell the word, let alone pronounce it, let alone know what it means."

"It's just your distorted viewpoint," Judy snapped. "You don't really know Uncle Clem, and until you do you shouldn't beat him over the head like that."

"No," I said. "I guess an ax is the thing to use."

Judy frowned. "Look, Bill, you'd better start getting used to the fact that Clem Brainard is my uncle, and that I'm very fond of him."

"Well, just remember," I grumbled, "that it's you I'm marrying, and those well-known vows won't be worded to include sweet Uncle Clem. Him I don't want rammed down my throat like the second half of a double feature."

"I'm sorry you feel that way," Judy said, and each word was encased in a tiny ice cube which cracked open with a brittle sound as it hit the air. "Especially," she concluded, "since there is no real reason for it."

This, if I were nailed down under Boy Scout oath, I would have to admit. But there probably was sufficient motivation for me in the fact that I was in the midst of my third Dugan's Special, and three Dugan's Specials react like nothing else in this world—unless it's a fourth D.S.

"Mayberry, you're a chump!" I exploded. "You think you've been living, but it isn't even a reasonable facsimile."

Well, Judy had posted her storm-warnings, but I didn't see them, and blithely following the previously charted course I said: "But you've got to admit, dumpling, that he's sure slipped his trolley over this Mayberry thing." I dug a rolled-up copy of the *Express* from my pocket and tapped it admiringly.

"Poor Uncle Clem," I began—but I didn't say anything more, because there was Judy scrambling to her feet, five feet five inches of short-circuit, the sparks flying from those big green eyes like Vesuvius at its best.

Next, in a couple hundred well-chosen and expressively delivered words, she let me know she was tired of hearing about Enoch Mayberry. She was tired of my picking on Uncle Clem. And as far as *she* was concerned I need no longer worry about those vows I'd mentioned, or at least any that she might be party to!

Dames! As I said before, you can't figure them. I leave it to you—had I said anything wrong? Of course not. But there was Judy sailing toward the door, and there I was trying to coax my lower jaw to renew something like normal relations with the rest of my face.

I didn't know whether to be mad, indifferent or panicky. Judy and I had never had a fight before, and this was all new stuff. I thought maybe I'd better phone in a little while and see if she'd cooled off.

So I gave her a half hour to get home and then called. Judy answered. I said, "Hello, dumpling!"—and that was that. She must have slammed the phone down with both hands and used a wind-up besides.

I rubbed my ear and went over to the bar. "Another special," I said gloomily, and after I downed it I suddenly was aware that I disliked Enoch Mayberry very much. It was all his fault. He and his money!

The next day was Tuesday, with one more day for the contest to run. Jim Kirby called me in. "Better go out to Mayberry's," he said, "and fetch up some sort of special wind-up piece for tomorrow. And tell him we're counting on releasing the winner's name Monday, so we'll need his selection Saturday."

Enoch received me cordially, rubbing his hands. "It's astounding," he beamed. "Simply thousands of won-

derful ideas. How will I ever decide?"

I regarded Enoch bleakly, thinking he ought to eat them, and the one which finally choked him to death would be the winner.

But I just said, "I need a statement that I can whip into a final story."

Enoch placed his fingertips together thoughtfully. Then his face brightened. "Just say I consider this contest as a—as a fine expression of constructive community thinking, and that—well, it has given me a chance to broaden and enjoy my own life just that much more as a result." He looked at me anxiously. "Will that do?" he asked.

I nodded. "I know how to take it away from there," I said. And then as I looked at him and thought of what he had said, I felt the steam rising within me, felt the sullen anger being mixed with a withering pity for this poor little self-denying creature.

Suddenly I was fed up with the whole thing. It had boomeranged in my face just as I feared it would. And this guy had the nerve to talk of enjoying life as *he* was living it!

I hardly recognized my own voice when the words poured out of my mouth, but they sure poured, and I didn't care where the stream ended.

"Mayberry, you're a chump!" I exploded. "You *think* you've been living, but it isn't even a reasonable facsimile. Why, the Piltdown Man had more fun than you, and he didn't have that first nickel!"

With the impetus of that start I was unstoppable, and if there was such a word as "consequences" in my vocabulary I was unaware of it at the moment.

"*You're* talking about life!" I barked. "You, who's never been out of the State—who's never even been on a train, or on a good drunk—who's been in bed by ten o'clock every night for thirty years!"

I leaned forward confidentially and poked a finger into his chest. "Enoch, old boy," I croaked, "you should only know what you could do with that dough you want to spend!"

I made a smacking sound with my lips. "Look," I whispered hoarsely. "You've never been to New York. You're not an old man, Enoch. You ought to see the Big Town. The shows—and the dames, Enoch, the dames!" I grabbed his lapels, practically crawling into his lap. "Travel, Enoch," I said with an expansive gesture. "Miami! . . . Ahhh, Miami! Those sands. . . . Biscayne Bay! Those beauties. . . . Get yourself a yacht, a big motor cruiser! Fish for *real* fish—big, fighting swordfish, not those mudcats you pull out around here!"

I was practically drooling at the thought of it, but I was far from through.

"Keep traveling, Enoch," I continued. "Rio—you'd love it. Paris—" I paused, then said it again as though it were something sacred: "*Paris,* Enoch! The Folies Bergère—the Bal Tabarin! *There's* a spot for you, Enoch, and there are a couple other addresses I could give you on the Rue d'— Oh, well, never mind!"

I paused for breath and sighed. "*Then* you'd be living—really living, Enoch!"

Enoch Mayberry sat recoiled in the deepest recesses of his chair, looking as though he feared any minute I might hang one on his chin. He opened his mouth to say something, couldn't find his voice, and closed his mouth again.

I stood up, finally, feeling a bit guilty. "Sorry I ran off at the mouth like that," I said. "I— Uh, just forget it."

Then I left fast. I wasn't mad at Enoch any more, just sorry for him. Almost as sorry for him as I was for myself, because unless I could square things with Judy—and quick—my future was about as promising as more heat from the janitor.

I was really a glum duck the next two days. I phoned Judy twice and struck out twice without even an official time at bat.

THEN it was Saturday. Mayberry phoned and said that at noon he would send over his winning choice by messenger. By noon the joint was really jumping. Kirby had invited the mayor, the council president and a cluster of other civic leaders to serve as official witnesses. Kirby played it to the hilt!

Exactly at noon a messenger delivered an envelope. You could feel the expectancy in the air as Kirby ripped it open. His fingers were trembling a bit from excitement as he drew out the letter and started to read.

And then there came from Jim Kirby's throat a Sound: A masterful blend of many things, dominated by the dulcet tones of a two-timed bull and the anguished cry of a man who's just discovered his pocket has been picked.

It was a fearsome, room-filling sound, and it was accompanied by a bulging of Kirby's eyes and neck until he looked like a caricature painted on a red balloon.

Everyone stared at Kirby, but Kirby was glaring at only one person: Me!

"Chandler!" he shrieked. "You—you—what did you do?"

"Who—me?" I asked innocently.

Kirby shoved the letter in my face. "Read it!" he bellowed. I did; it read:

> Dear Mr. Kirby:
>
> After many hours of the fullest deliberation I have made my decision. I have decided that the best way to spend the $50,000 would be in the manner suggested by your Mr. Chandler. And so to Mr. Chandler with my deepest appreciation will go my check for $25,000, as the prize offered. It would be difficult for me to explain Mr. Chandler's winning suggestion, and no doubt he can do it better than I can. Please have him do so—and by the time he does, I will be putting his suggestion into effect.
>
> With many thanks for your newspaper's coöperation and efforts, I remain,
>
> Sincerely yours,
> *(Signed)* ENOCH MAYBERRY

I stared at Kirby, feeling as though I'd been hit by a ton of bricks which left no pain, only a queer numbing of all mental faculties!

"What's the gag, Chandler?" I could hear Kirby screaming from somewhere around Main and Tenth streets.

I finally worked my tongue loose from the tar pit it was mired in.

"There's—there's no gag," I stammered. "I didn't tell him anyth—" And then it came back to me. "Jumping Jehoshaphat!" I murmured weakly. "Oh, golly! Now I remember!"

"Remember *what!*" Kirby howled, as the walls shook and the ceiling raised and lowered like waves.

"I offered him some free advice," I said, still limp from the thought. "I wasn't making a contest pitch! I—I just told him he ought to take his dough and start living. I—I—"

"No matter what you told him!" Kirby rasped. "It was potent enough to make blasted monkeys of the *Express* and all of us! You're fired, Chandler! Get out of here before I have you arrested! Before I kill you with my bare—"

"Now, look, Jim," I interrupted. "Don't get yourself in—"

"Get out!" Kirby howled. "Get out of here quick!"

Well, I was a little peeved myself by then, so I got. I could have squared things, probably, but after six years I'd had enough of that guy Kirby, anyway. I floated, rather than walked out of the office.

Very dimly I was aware of many things: There'd be a howl from the people that would be just a shade short of the voice of doom—and as Kirby said, the *Express* had really sawed itself off the end of a high limb.

Legal recourse against Enoch? Absolutely none. He'd said he wanted to spend fifty grand to do some good for something or someone, and it was now a matter of record that he'd been convinced "someone" also could be Enoch Mayberry.

Of course Enoch wasn't going to win any popularity contests when he returned, but I was willing to make book that once Enoch sampled the product I'd inadvertently sold him, he was going to do a lot of buying.

Me—I've got a sense of humor. Once the full picture became clear to me, I laughed until I wellnigh burst my seams. I was still laughing six hours later down in Dugan's Den, when I was called to the telephone.

"Hello," I cackled; and then I almost dropped the receiver. It was Judy.

"Bill," she started out primly, "if you don't turn that twenty-five thousand dollars over to some worthy charity, I'll hate you as long as I live."

"But, dumpling," I began. "Don't you already hate me?"

"Well," she said. "Well. . . . I just don't want you to—to do anything you'd be sorry for. . . . And if you let all those people down—"

"Dumpling!" I shouted gleefully. "If I—if I— Look, dream up some ideas—I'll be right over!"

Well, there isn't much more to tell. I like it fine, here. It's— Oh, excuse it; I forgot to mention I'm the new assistant city editor on the *Journal.*

Great gang, here, great gang! And that Clem Brainard, he's a piparoo. Guess it's just a matter of viewpoint, like Judy said. Now, those knuckleheads over at the *Express*—

There was only one fly in the soup: The day I went to work Clem Brainard came over rubbing his hands, the spark of genius burning in his eyes.

"Bill," he said, "I've got it! That twenty-five grand you're turning over to the people. . . . The *Journal* will match it with another twenty-five, and we'll have a *real* contest . . . Can't let the good people down, m'boy—can't let the city down."

He pounded my desk with his fist. "Yes sir," he beamed, "we'll have a *real* contest! On the level, this time, with no dim-witted Enoch Mayberry to squirrel things up. Boy, will we murder those miserable souls over at the *Express!* We'll *murder* 'em, Billy!"

And then he clapped me on the shoulder. "And since you've had experience on this sort of thing," he boomed, "you'll handle it for us, hey?"

Well, I half rose out of my chair, and for two counterfeit Jap yen I'd gladly have belted Clem Brainard on the beak. But on second thought I remembered that Clem Brainard was giving the bride away, two weeks hence—and one doesn't go around belting one's uncle-in-law on the beak!

"Chandler!" Kirby shrieked. "You —you—what did you do?"

Baptism of Fire

A brief drama of the Marines going into action.

by LT. ELIHU ROBINSON

I SAW my first Jap at fifty yards. He was wearing glasses and he popped his head up excitedly out of his hole every thirty seconds or so.

We were in the first wave and we huddled, strained and dry-lipped, in the LCVP. Five hundred yards from the beach we ran into mortar-fire. A couple of near ones splashed geysers of cold water into the craft. We huddled over our weapons instinctively to keep them dry.

I wasn't thinking then of my wife or my child, or of my previous life. I was living *here* and *now* and not anywhere else.

The boat jammed, stopped with a lurch, and the coxswain raced the engine several times to get us secure. "All ready, men?" I yelled—and to myself sounded foolish.

With a clang, the ramp splashed down and the men farthest front jumped over into waist-high water and struck out for the beach. I found myself moving my legs awkwardly and with effort through the surf. We were fanning out left and right; my position was supposed to be first, or in a place in the left rear where I could control the men; and there I was right in the middle! The water dropped from my knees to my ankles, and I looked back to see if all hands were ashore.

Then as I turned, I saw the bank was steeper than I had expected. The men were racing up it, with the footing difficult in the volcanic ash. The wind was blowing strongly. We were to keep going inland; if the first wave is pinned down, it leaves no room for successive waves on the beach.

The noise around us was terrific. Then up ahead I saw this Jap, and that precise moment we were caught in the sharp *rat-tat-tat* of enfilading machine-gun fire. We went prone. They had us beautifully.

At other places, I read later, the first wave got in several hundred yards—but their defenses lay right down on the beach in our area, just ten yards from the high-water line. Their guns were chattering incessantly; I listened for the duller thud of the bolt, ignoring the sharper crack of the bullets. Fire was coming from the left, I decided, and on my belly I pushed my way back, toward the left.

Then I found it: The volcanic ash was being blown away from the concrete by this whipping wind. They had guns mounted inside and were firing left and right, right down the long axis of our lines. Oh, they had done an excellent defense job!

I SIGNALED one of my men forward. He was holding a grenade in his clenched hand. He darted ahead, keeping low, and dodging swiftly. He dropped in a crater hole some twenty yards ahead and then kept wriggling forward on all fours. He had got within ten yards when another machine-gun off to the right started firing. They were covering one pillbox with another. He slumped on his face.

I watched him for about ten seconds, unemotionally, then I turned my head toward the beach. They were bringing in the first of our tanks. I touched the boy next to me. We were supposed to be spread out, but there just wasn't room. He looked up. I indicated the pillbox and the tank. He understood and shoved off back.

The tank was barely off the craft. They seemed to be having trouble with it in the loose ash. But its .75 spoke with a roar: *Crunch-crunch!* And the pillbox was no more. I couldn't help grinning.

I made my way back to my center. The Jap with glasses was still popping up. I wondered why he hadn't been taken care of. I sighted along my sights and squeezed hard on my trigger. He was out of sight and I kept squeezing. Nothing happened; already that fine ash had lodged in the vaseline I had used so copiously for a lubricant.

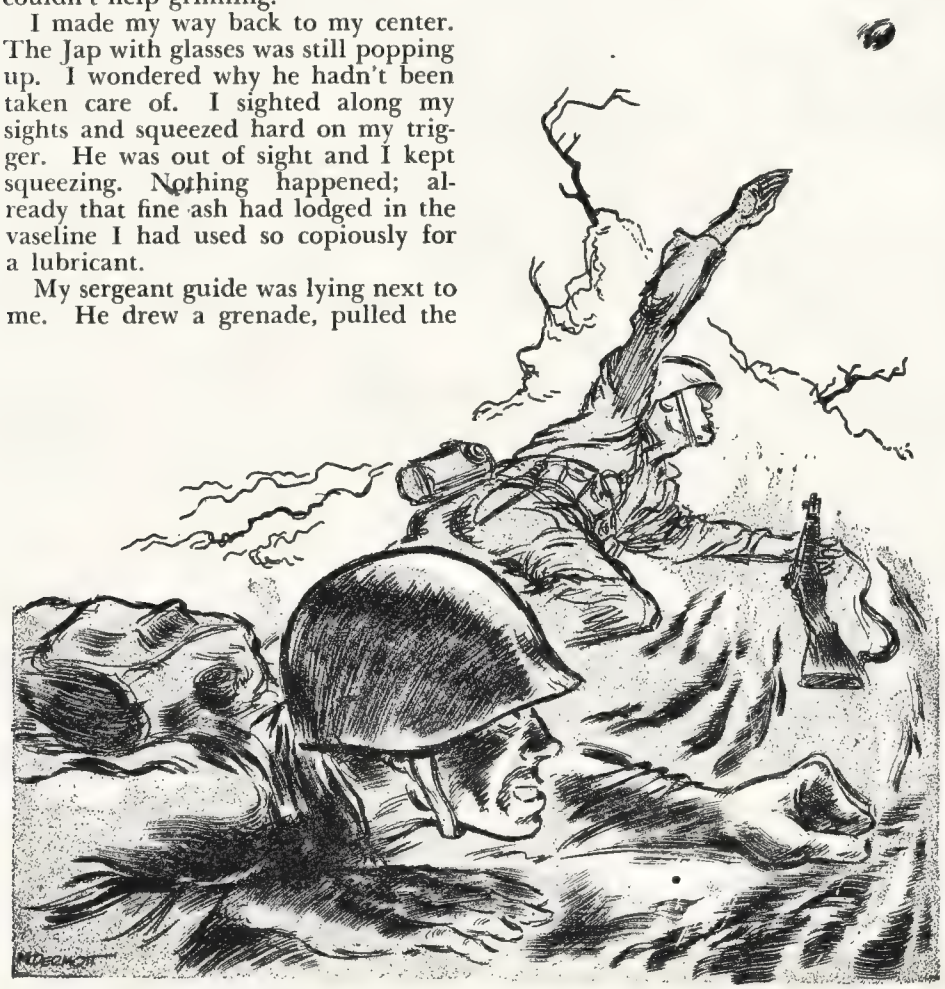
My sergeant guide was lying next to me. He drew a grenade, pulled the pin and let it go. It arched slowly through the air and disappeared in the hole. He winked at me. But a moment later the Jap's head reappeared and the grenade soared back toward us. But it was a poor throw: it hit the ground about halfway between us and went off, raising a cloud of dust.

The sergeant drew out another and held it longer and let it go. It landed off to the right and did no damage. He drew a third and held it so long after pulling the pin that I voluntarily squeezed even lower in the ground. It went out in a gentle toss and went off just as it landed in the hole.

We went forward. There were two Japs lying in the hole when we got there.

It was like that all day. The mortar-fire was on us all the time but we were working against the machine-guns in that myriad of pillboxes. I lost nineteen casualties that day, three killed.

Toward dusk I crept back to the Captain's CP. He was huddled there with a handy-talkie. I plopped down next to him. "How is it?" I asked. He was a nice boy from Savannah, Georgia, and he had been through Roi-Namur, Saipan, and Tinian.



He drew a grenade, pulled the pin and let it go.

I saw my first Jap, popping his head up excitedly.

He spoke bitterly. "Saipan," he said, "was child's-play—and we got cited for Saipan."

They didn't bother us that night. Not that we slept; you couldn't dig a hole in that ash—it kept rolling down from the sides. But we got some chow.

The next day was better. The tanks were doing a job. And when we ran into blockhouses too big a job for us, the engineers came forward in teams equipped with flamethrowers, smoke-grenades, and charges to get them.

But still they were hitting us. From the high ground they were laying their heavy stuff, and their light stuff was everywhere.

MY platoon sergeant got it around two o'clock that afternoon. His shoulder was a gory mess. There was no corpsman around, so I tied him up as best I could and a couple of men carried him off back to the beach. When they got back, they reported to me:

"He'll be all right. But, Christ, the corpsmen say, how they'd like a nice clean bullet-hole!"

We kept going forward 'n little runs and every time we dropped down, I looked around to count them.

Late in the afternoon, it started to rain. It was cold as hell and we spread our ponchos over whatever depth of hole we were able to make, but the rain trickled in underneath, and we were lying in pools of water that were freezing. For the first time I felt some compassion for the Army lying in ice and snow in the fields of Europe.

I made my way back to the Company CP at dusk to discuss things again with the Captain.

"You're going to have to pull back," he said.

"How much?" I asked. Giving up any of that inch-earned ground went against the grain, for it had cost too heavily.

"Just about seventy-five yards," he said.

"All right," I said and got to my knees. As I did, something landed with a plop in the crater. I must have jumped back six feet but nothing

happened. He started to laugh and I started to laugh. It was a Nip mortar-shell, but a dud. We sat there screaming with laughter till we were almost silly.

They got us up some wire that night and we laid it. Concertinas. We placed our machine-guns in the dark and hung cans on the wire to warn us in case of an attack. We posted watches. Tonight we had to get some sleep.

But early in the evening we began to hear those sounds. The Japs would crawl up as close as possible, hit a grenade on their helmets to set off the safety and then lob them. Not much damage was done, but you can be sure we got little sleep. At around ten in the evening, however, they knocked off on this, although both sides kept sending up periodic flares. I dozed a bit until about two A. M. It was so cold we found it hard to stretch out, even though the rain had ceased.

At two o'clock they threw the works at us. They're great ones for night attacks: Night infiltrations and night assaults. This was the latter. There was no preliminary bombardment. In the dark our listening-posts opened up and then we began firing all along the line. For three steady hours we poured forth a wall of steel in front of that barbed wire. Our outposts didn't even have a chance to come in. There were screams and roars out there which merely made us increase the tempo and fury of our attack. We let go with everything—and judging by the sounds of mass anguish, we were being successful. We sure burned up ammunition.

Dawn came slowly and queerly, and we looked out with satisfaction at corpses strewn and piled on one another. We must have got almost five hundred in our sector alone.

Then it was our turn.

I guess we felt they were weakening out there; and after their losses, they couldn't hold as stubbornly as before. We let go with our supporting artillery and then really moved out. But not by the foot any longer! We took the air-strip that morning and then did that wheeling turn we had rehearsed so often, and started north.

I don't know when I got my first premonition that it was coming. Maybe it was the way the sun came out. I can't describe it to you, but I knew definitely within myself that today was going to be the day—if at all.

WE took the air-strip; beyond it six hundred yards was a rise in the ground, a ridge, behind which we figured they had a good collection of mortars. I guess they knew what was coming. Our planes were laying their eggs and strafing in there. Sometimes they came so close to us that it was a miracle they didn't put some bullets in our own positions. That has happened.

Somebody had said something about 100- or 1000-pound mortars that the Nips were using. We had plenty of the usual shrapnel, but hadn't seen anything like that. But off to our right this huge casing landed and partially buried itself in the dust. We waited momentarily for it to go off. It didn't. And then clanging up from our rear came one of our tanks, making straight for this unexploded shell. All of us pressed down and away, burying our faces. On came the tank—and on. One of its treads crunched right into the casing and over it. There was the sound of metal splitting metal,

Somebody slugged me; I went down like a ton of bricks.

but nothing more. . . . A smile ran up and down the line.

At about the same time something did land—and close! The earth seemed to bounce and we were all tossed about four inches off the ground, coming down hard. At the same time up jumped my platoon guide—bareheaded—and started to run to the rear. We all looked up. The shell had landed only ten yards from him. Crazy and alone he ran, until his legs seemed to give in under him and he collapsed. Not a bit of steel in him, but the concussion had caused internal injuries, I found out later.

BUT the particular problem at the moment was the high ground. It had to be taken frontally. It had all been frontal in this operation; the flatness and bareness of the ground precluded any tactical deployment. It was go in and *slug—slug—slug!*

All up and down the line, men got to their feet and started forward, pausing every so often to aim off a shot at the high ground. The fire from the ridge was light. A few smoke-shells landed on top, but the wind whipped away a great part of their effectiveness. We trudged forward, bayonets fixed.

As we reached the foot of the ridge, we started to move quicker—to race up the slope.

It was hand-to-hand at the top—confusion and pandemonium in the smoke. I didn't see much and I must have lost control. I kept running to and fro in the excitement, and then we went down behind the ridge.

The Jap mortar-men broke and ran. There must have been three sections of mortars there; and it meant a good deal to have taken them out. The Japs were running for dear life and our boys were laying their automatic rifles on them as they fled up the ridge behind. I was exulting up and down the line—proud of each and everyone of them—and, I guess, just a bit proud of myself.

And then it happened.

Somebody slugged me behind the knees with a baseball bat; I went down like a ton of bricks and in an agony of pain. I remember solicitous faces about me, and then I must have passed out.

I came too, lying on the beach as they were preparing to carry me to a nearby evacuation craft. I was bleary-eyed.

A medic spoke to me. "You're going to be all right."

I must have looked doubtful, for he repeated:

"You're going to be all right. It's just a nasty bit of shrapnel up against the bone."

I grinned; it may sound funny, but I grinned. I was glad—glad to have been hit. Can you believe that?

"You'll be O.K.," he said again.

I started to laugh. It wasn't the drug, either. I was laughing and the tears were running down my cheeks. I was happy to have been hit—and relieved. It was going to happen today and this was it—just a bad leg. The Nips had had their chance, and all I'd got was a piece of shrapnel lodged in my leg! I was laughing.

He looked at me in astonishment as they carried me aboard.

Lilli frowned up into Vicente's face. "Vin, you stop your bullyin', hear me!"

No Place *for* Women

A Complete Book-Length Novel

by TOM GILL

HER voice was shaking with resentful anger. "Men like you, Mr. Bogard, seem to think a woman shouldn't have anything to do with business. I suppose you think we should just stay home and have babies."

"It's certainly one occupation men can't compete in." Cliff Bogard nodded in complete accord, and once again he saw her eyes gather fire. He pretended to busy himself with his safety belt—there was no earthly sense to all this fighting.

But they just hadn't got along. Everything had gone wrong since he first saw her. Everything! Because of her, he had junked his own plans and started on this fool's errand; because of her, he was being bounced around in this asthmatic sewing-machine, five thousand feet above the jungle.

For three bumpy, rain-lashed hours they had flown upriver, buffeted by savage gusts, bucking a wind that grew ever stronger. Twice the little plane had made wide detours to avoid storm centers—already they were low on gas, and overdue. And all because of this ivory-skinned, red-haired person across the aisle.

Reluctantly he admitted she might be called lovely, in a remote, withdrawn sort of way—lovely, and a meddlesome nuisance. In the four hours since they met she had acted like everything from a frightened kid to a stubborn bully. Mostly she had been plain bossy. He frowned, partly in anger, partly in speculation—there was something about her that didn't quite click. And something about her name raised vague memories: Janet Norman—he had an irritating sense of having heard it before.

With growing disapproval he looked at the little metal sketch-box in her lap. So she dabbled in that stuff! An artist. He didn't need an artist. He wasn't sure what he did need, but it certainly didn't include artists. Then he realized that the dark eyes were watching him.

"Have you seen this?" She held up a magazine.

"What is it?"

"All about you." In a clear, precise voice she began reading: "'With the controversy over synthetic rubber still raging, experts have agreed on only one point—we need more high-grade rubber to raise the quality of synthetic. Just now the last hope of Washington's Rubber Division is big, good-looking Clifton Bogard, recently picked to bring the New Dixie plantations of South America into production. Bogard is a wise choice. Known from Rio to Laredo as a two-fisted, hard-boiled realist with few illusions, he has already made—and lost—two fortunes. Now he is on his way to New Dixie to make—or lose—a third.'"

She glanced up. "You don't look old enough for all that."

"It doesn't take long to go broke if you put your mind to it."

She laughed. There was an unsuspected lilt to her infrequent laughter that made you wish she did it more often. "Shall I read the rest?" she asked.

"Just repeat that part about my good looks."

But she shook her head and read on: "'The New Dixie rubber plantations are the Government's best bet. Established in the late days of the rubber boom by a colony of U. S. citizens who migrated to South America before the Civil War, the plantations can be made to produce the highest grade rubber in the Western Hemisphere.

"'Getting the rubber out may not be easy. One well-known operator has already tried—and failed. It looks like a tough job, but Cliff Bogard can be a tough man.'"

Janet Norman closed the magazine. "Maybe that's your trouble—you were too tough."

"Maybe," he amended, "maybe all I needed was your Olympian wisdom."

She ignored that—she had a way of ignoring everything she didn't like. "What made you decide to open up the New Dixie plantations?" she asked.

His lean, tanned face went suddenly somber. "What difference does it make? For one thing, I had the machinery, and a gang of wild Irishmen who needed work. So I looked into it."

"What did you find?"

"I found that one man had tried to open up those same plantations just a few weeks before. He'd been told to get out of the country and stay out."

"Did he go?"

"He went so fast he didn't stop to empty his warehouse. It's still up the river, full of machinery. When I saw him down on the coast, he told me a story about a gang called Blacklanders who live near the plantations and don't want anybody there. They must have treated him pretty rough—nothing could have persuaded him to go back. He was washed up. So I took over his option, bought his warehouse, and moved my boys up from the Argentine. Then I went to New Dixie to look at the plantations."

"And got thrown out yourself."

"Yes, but not by the Blacklanders. In my case it was the New Dixie authorities. They held me at the boundary for two days, told me they'd decided to recall the option, and next morning shipped me back to the coast."

Bogard's slow, deliberate manner of speech gave his words grim emphasis. "That put me in a sweet spot. When you've borrowed up to the hilt, time counts. I began to build fires under the Government officials to make the New Dixie crowd stick to their option, and then Washington cabled me to hold everything. So for

three weeks I held everything while the storage charges on my machinery whittled down my bank-account, and the men on my payroll had nothing to do but eat their heads off and raise hell with the local ordinances—I nearly went broke bailing them out. Then yesterday Washington cabled that everything was fine—they were sending someone to straighten it all out."

Janet Norman nodded. "And they sent me."

Cliff sighed. Yes, they sent her. He had gone to the airport that morning expecting an official Washington dignitary, or perhaps a whole delegation, and found this tailored, copper-haired girl whose outward self-assurance was curiously belied by her frightened eyes. She was traveling on an official-business visa, and presented Cliff with a letter from the chief of the Rubber Division, asking him to be guided entirely by Miss Norman's judgment.

The first clash came when he learned she had reserved two seats on the plane leaving for New Dixie that very morning.

"But they just got through kicking me out of New Dixie," he objected. "What makes you think you can persuade them now to take me to their bosoms?"

"Because I know them," she answered shortly. "I lived there."

"That may seem like a good reason to you, but it doesn't to me. What I need is someone who can put on the pressure and get them to honor my option. That certainly makes more sense than flying back on the chance you can talk them into changing their minds. If they say no a second time, all the king's horses won't change them."

"They won't say no. They're just suspicious of outsiders. It took years for my father to win their confidence. Please leave it all to me."

Patiently Cliff had tried again. "Look! This job is no peanut undertaking, and it's important to more people than me. My equipment alone adds up to three hundred thousand dollars, and I have to train an army of rubber-gatherers before I get a cent of it back. If I don't start soon, I go broke; and if I go broke, a lot of men will be out of jobs and out of cash, and the United States will be shy a good many tons of top-grade rubber. They're all banking on me, and I can't let them down."

"Then just you let me handle it." Her tone was the tone one evoked to placate little children, and Cliff's collar went suddenly tight.

"Mamma will fix, will she?" He drew a deep, exasperated breath and turned away.

By way of change, Cliff looked at the pilot—the same pilot who had brought him up on his ill-fated trip before. Pablo Ramirez, they called him at the airport—owner and operator of this one-plane, one-man airline. Ramirez had learned his flying in Texas, together with a hodge-podge of American slang that he never quite got on top of. Short, slight of stature, with close-cropped mustache and beady black eyes like new shoebuttons, Ramirez held the reputation of being an efficient mechanic and a safe, steady flyer. Bogard liked him from the start, and between the two an easy friendship had sprung up.

At the airport Bogard noticed Ramirez' Latin eyes studying Janet Norman with a kind of despairing wonder; but now the little pilot's attention was centered on the heavy cloud-banks that grew ever thicker, until presently they blotted out the earth.

To break the long silence, Cliff turned back to the girl.

"How did the Rubber Division find out about you?"

"When all the publicity started over New Dixie, I went to Washington and told them everything I knew about the plantations and the people who own them. Then when you"—she hesitated—"when you got yourself into trouble, they sent me down."

Cliff's collar was feeling tight again. He couldn't resist asking, "What do you do when you're not busy rescuing people?"

"I illustrate books." She looked quickly up and froze. "Or was that just a dig?"

"Maybe just a dig." He was silent a moment, watching her withdraw into herself, then he asked, "Was New Dixie run by a woman when you lived there?"

"Surely—Claribel. Her grandfather founded it. Did you like her?"

"I didn't even see her. She just sent word that my rubber deal was off, and next day they shipped me back to the coast in this dilapidated crate."

The whir of the engine deepened—they were passing through clouds so dense Cliff could not make out the wing-tips. The pilot was beckoning to him; and slipping off his safety belt, Cliff groped his way forward.

Pablo raised his voice above the engine. "Ahead comes another storm, and we are too scarce on gas to run around it. I go down for a landing."

"Anything I can do?"

"*Si.* This river, she is lousy with floating logs and sandbars. If we nose over, tak' care of the señorita." He closed the throttle.

Cliff went slowly back. It wasn't an attractive prospect. Even if they didn't pile up, it meant spending a night in the mosquito-infested jungle. Well, she had asked for it.

"There's a storm breaking ahead," he told her casually. "The pilot is going to land."

Chapter Two

She gave a little gasp as he jerked her belt to be sure the clasp was tight. The engine was idling now; except for the wind in the wires, the world had grown intensely quiet, and beneath them the mist was shredding thin; Bogard began to catch intermittent glimpses of the river—it looked dangerously winding.

Gliding in a broad spiral, the pilot had leaned forward, seeking a stretch of water suitable for landing, and in short seconds they were under the clouds, the river coming up at them with appalling speed, the wind shrieking louder through the wires. A moment more, and they were barely skimming the jungle; great flat-topped trees whizzed by them; and above the curtain of lianas that screened the riverbank three snow-white cranes flew wildly across their path.

Still lower, Cliff's eyes were straining. A log, silvered by years of equatorial sun, loomed up upon the surface and was lost astern. If they struck one of those things—

He saw Ramirez pull back on the wheel, leveling off, and the tail of the plane dropped sharply. They were settling closer and closer to the muddy water, so close Cliff could see the surface ruffle in the wind; then with a swirl and a snarl they struck. Foam surged past the window, and Cliff felt the sudden backward pull of the pontoons. He grasped Janet by both shoulders to hold her, but in the next second Pablo turned and grinned. They were safely down.

They had landed barely in time. Almost at once the full fury of the storm was on them, blotting out river and jungle with a solid, slanting wall of water; and unfastening his safety belt, Pablo rolled a cigarette.

"This," he announced cozily, "it is better than a blind landing with a dead stick, no?"

But Janet's face was still white. "Do we have to spend the night here?" she asked.

"No, señorita. We are still twelve mile' from New Dixie, but somewhere close should be the *finca* of Wade Carroll." He sat down beside her. "You remember Wade Carroll—a little bald-headed man?"

"My father knew him well," she answered.

Ramirez laughed. "He is the queer sketch. Catches wild animals for zoos. And Lilli helps him."

"Lilli?" Janet shook her head. "I don't remember Lilli."

"Lilli is—how you say?—his ward. When her mamma and papa die two year ago, Wade bring her back from the jungle. He is going to send her away to school. School!" The pilot sighed. "I could teach her more pleasant things than any schools." He blew a kiss of pure Latin tribute. *"Por Dios,* she is one knockdown!"

FOR TWENTY MINUTES the squall lashed them, while the two men sat comfortably smoking; then Cliff glanced quickly up. The clouds to the west had split; the sun was kindling the jungle to flame; and both river banks were steaming like a cosmic Turkish bath. Just ahead, an alligator raised its blunt snout, looked at them with red, incurious eyes, then slowly sank, while low across the water a flock of parakeets chattered by. . . . The storm was over.

Pablo pushed open a window, and into the little cabin seeped the warm, humid breath of the jungle, heavy with the smell of untold centuries of decaying vegetation.

Janet leaned out. "It takes me back two years."

Pablo smiled. "It is the homecoming, no?" He dropped his cigarette into the river and rose. "Now we taxi up to Wade Carroll's pier. He will have horses to take you to New Dixie."

They caught sight of the pier at the next turn—a rough wharf made of a dozen logs driven upright into the river mud, and a narrow catwalk of boards; but just before they reached it, Bogard saw a bareheaded man hurrying out to them.

"There is Wade," Pablo called back.

A small, narrow-shouldered man in middle life, with face tanned to leather by the sun, and a head so bald it shone. As he reached the edge of the wharf, he cupped his hands and called across the water: "What's wrong this time, Pablo? Out o' gas?"

The slow, soft cadence of the deep South made the voice a friendly one; but as the plane drew nearer, Wade cast a quick look behind him, and his voice changed suddenly to an urgent whisper: "Don't stop here, Pablo! You-all better get goin'."

"Not stop?" Puzzled, the pilot snapped the throttle closed. "Why should I not stop? What is it cooking?"

"Blacklanders. They been around here all afternoon. If they— Why, it's Miss Janet!" Wade's bronzed face wrinkled in surprise. "Well, now, this is nice—just right nice to see you." His eyes shifted to the tall man behind her, and the smile died. "You're Cliff Bogard, I guess."

"That's right."

The anxious look returned. "I don't think you oughta land here. The Blacklanders been talkin' about you. If they come back this way, they aint gonna be sociable."

Pablo was showing signs of acute impatience. *"Madre de mi alma!* My gas, it is almost gone. Blacklanders or no, we stay." He tossed a rope at Wade's feet. "Will you mak' fast, please?"

Unwillingly Wade snubbed the nose of the seaplane to the wharf, and Janet stretched out both hands.

"Wade, you haven't changed a bit." For the first time since he met her, Cliff thought he detected a spontaneous warmth in her voice and eyes, and he saw that her handclasp brought a smile to Wade's leathery face.

But the little hunter still glanced nervously back toward shore. "If you-all get your duffel ready, I'll saddle up and we can start for New Dixie. No sense lookin' for trouble if you don't have to." For a second he studied Bogard's square jaw and level eyes. "You don't look like you scare very easy, Mister; but those Blacklanders ran that other fellow out so fast you could have set a cup of coffee on his coattails."

"They can't be looking for me," Cliff reminded him. "How could they know I'd land here?"

"Mebbe they didn't know," Wade conceded; "but the point is, they don't want you here."

"Sooner or later I'll have to meet them—it might as well be today."

"If it's all the same to you, I'd rather you did your meetin' some place else. Let's go up to the house."

Wade turned back toward shore, and leaving Pablo at the plane, Janet and Cliff followed along a winding path. It was cool and shadowy beneath the dripping canopy of jungle; and after a short walk they emerged upon a broad clearing where three shacks stood, roofed with palm leaves. As Cliff neared the larger building, he heard a voice repeating in a singsong monotone words that sounded vaguely familiar, and finally resolved themselves into *"Amo, amas, amat—amo, amas, amat—"*

Wade chuckled at Cliff's look of surprise. "It's Lilli, workin' over her Latin. Sounds awful bored, don't she? I want to send her to school in the States next year, but Lilli just don't cotton to learnin'."

"—amamus, amatis," the words droned tonelessly on, but now the voice ceased in midair. Cliff heard a book drop, then the quick patter of bare feet, and a girl stood in the doorway.

Seen in sharp relief against the blackness of the room, she seemed very young and marvelously alert, as if poised for instant flight. The smooth dark skin was richly tanned; the lips were full; the soft brown eyes slanted up and outward. Two thick strands of black hair were braided about her head, and a thin single-piece cotton garment, sleeveless and caught at the waist, accentuated her slenderness. Small in stature, every feature delicately chiseled, she gave the effect of a graceful and perfectly formed creature of the wild.

Swiftly her eyes moved from Bogard to Janet, then back to Bogard again. "Hello," she said, a little uncertainly.

"Lilli, this is Miss Norman," Wade called. "You remember Dr. Norman, her father—he brought you into the world." Wade jerked a thumb toward Cliff. "And this is Mr. Bogard. You-all come in and sit down."

Lilli moved back, her slanting eyes on Cliff.

IT WAS A PLAIN ROOM with rough board floor and handwrought chairs and tables. Tanned hides of crocodiles crowded the four walls, and opposite the door was a shelf of well-worn books. In one corner stood a rifle and a double-barreled shotgun.

But Wade remained ill at ease. "I just hate seemin' inhospitable, especially to you, Miss Janet," he began uncomfortably, "but that bunch of Blacklanders is almost sure to come back this way. Vicente's with 'em—he's the one who threw that other fellow out."

Wade was so clearly anxious to start Bogard on his way that Cliff half smiled. "I get the connection. But it might be helpful if I knew just who these Blacklanders are."

"Depends on who you ask. Up in New Dixie, folks would tell you they're a gang of outlaws and no-count riffraff. Once they was all New Dixie people, but they didn't like the way things was goin', so they pulled out in a body. We call 'em Blacklanders because they settled down and went to farmin' in the Blacklands. They got along fine with the natives—some of 'em intermarried, and started farms and small cattle outfits along the upper river."

"That's where the rubber plantations are," Janet added.

Wade peered out the window. "There aint been no love lost between the New Dixie people and the Blacklanders," he went on, "but they never bothered each other much until the New Dixie cattlemen—the vaqueros—began expandin' their ranges out toward the Blacklands. By that time the Blacklanders had fenced off

all the fertile pockets and pastures for their farms, but the vaqueros said they was squatters and started to drive 'em out. Two years ago, the Blacklanders got themselves a leader and served notice on the vaqueros they was tired of bein' pushed around. The vaqueros didn't pay much attention, until one by one they began disappearin'. Their horses came back with empty saddles, and the reins tied nice and neat to the horn."

"You mean they were killed."

"Nobody knows. They just never showed up again, and by the time they'd lost a dozen vaqueros, the people of New Dixie decided somethin' had to be done, so they went out to get the Blackland leader."

"Vicente?" Cliff asked.

"No, not Vicente. Nobody knows who the leader is or where he stays. That's the thing bothers the vaqueros. But wherever he is, he's got plenty brains and drivin' force to organize the Blacklanders like he has. It takes a real leader to turn a bunch of river farmers into fightin' men; and it aint Vicente, that's sure. Lilli, here, knew Vicente all her life—they was brought up together. His father's a Blacklander, mother's a Spanish woman."

Wade stopped. "Well, this aint gettin' you all headed for New Dixie. I better gather up some horses." He glanced toward Janet. "You got any ridin'-things, Miss Janet?"

She rose. "I'll go down to the plane and change." She followed Wade into the clearing.

THROUGH THE GLOOM of the cabin Bogard looked across the room at Lilli, sitting in the corner with bare feet curled up beneath her, like a dark-haired shadow. Wholly unconscious of the lengthening silence, she seemed content to sit there watching him with frank approval, apparently waiting for him to speak.

Bogard had caught sight of Wade's books, and with sudden interest he read the titles: "How to Behave on All Occasions," "The Southern Gentlewoman's Book of Etiquette," "How to Build a Two-Cycle Engine," "College Requirements for Women." He remembered Pablo's story of Wade's ambition to send this girl away to school, and picked up the book on the table.

"Why are you studying Latin?" he asked.

"Because he,"—she raised a brown hand toward the door,—"he wants me to."

"Like it?"

"Not much. I'd rather hunt or swim." Then with a swift smile: "But I'd like it if you read me some."

Dubiously Cliff opened the book. *"Ex quovis ligno—"* He laughed, and shook his head. "I've forgotten how!"

He had not heard her move, but she was standing beside him now.

"How old are you?" he asked.

"Seventeen." With lips and eyes she was smiling down at him. Seventeen! The calm, untroubled tranquillity of a child lay in those frankly smiling eyes; but dawning womanhood was framed there too. Life, with all its inescapable complexities, was reaching out to touch her, to whisper of things older and more enduring and far more exciting than Latin verbs.

Accepting his long scrutiny with perfect composure, her eyes were moving slowly over his face. "Is that a dimple?" she asked.

"What?" He pulled his thoughts back with a jerk.

She touched the deep cleft in his chin. "That."

"That," he answered, "was donated by an Argentine mule."

She laughed.

"When you laugh," he said, "you remind me of my kid sister."

It was wonderfully quiet and restful after the roar of the plane, and this girl was restful too. Already Cliff felt far closer to her than to Janet Norman, and far less need to be on guard—she wasn't the executive type.

A rustle in the thatched leaves above his head brought him bolt upright, and Cliff's startled gaze rose to the glistening coils of a snake gliding across a rafter.

Lilli smiled. "That's Uncle Wade's python. She's worth more than a dozen cats to keep the mice down. Want to see Uncle Wade's menagerie? We'll have time before the horses are ready." A note of eagerness gave new life to her voice.

He stood up. "Let's go."

The acrid odor of animals came to him even before he saw the huge semicircle of cages by the river. Most of them were flimsily made of bamboo, bound together with vines, but two were of sturdy steel, with heavily bolted doors, and in one of them a pair of ocelots paced restlessly. The other was empty.

"Don't get too near those boxes," Lilli cautioned. "Uncle Wade keeps his bushmasters there."

"What's he do with all these animals?" Cliff asked.

"Sells them to zoos. Twice a year the boat comes up to take them away."

There were beasts all about them. A dozen monkeys scolded from a nearby cage; a pair of coati-mundi ran toward them, uttering small, friendly noises, hoping for food. Then close beside Cliff a low snarl made him whirl: a full-grown jaguar, lips drawn back, was looking up with deadly, greenish eyes.

Lilli leaned down. "You do like to scare people, don't you, Plato?" She knelt before the cage, and the snarling ceased; slowly the anger drained from the malignant, green eyes; and now Lilli raised her arm, and reaching between the bars, scratched the jaguar's head, while Cliff watched, fascinated, hardly breathing.

She laughed up at him. "If you tried that, you'd lose an arm."

It made a memorable picture in the soft, dappled sunlight—the girl, slender as a willow, with bare feet and braided hair, her arm about the great cat that stood with lowered head and sleepy, placid eyes. Then suddenly a growl rose in the big cat's throat. Not until a moment later did Bogard catch the sound of hoofs coming from the jungle behind him. Bogard turned. There in the trail a rider sat a great black horse.

Never in Bogard's life had he seen a man so huge. He must have been over six feet tall, but height was no real measure of his bulk, for the body itself was bearlike. The face was dark, almost swarthy, with well-molded lips, high-arched nose, and tawny eyes—a strange, unequal face that just missed being handsome.

Throughout a silent moment the rider looked down; then, dismounting, he walked forward until Cliff saw with surprise that tall as he himself was, this man towered over him.

Even then he did not speak, but stood watching Cliff, studying him. There was something vaguely menacing in that leisurely appraisal; and as if Lilli sensed it too, she moved to Bogard's side.

"Hello, Vin," she said in a half whisper, and Cliff knew he stood face to face with the one man Wade had wanted him to avoid.

CHAPTER THREE

AT sound of Lilli's voice, Vicente looked toward her, then he spoke her name, and a brief warmth softened his tawny eyes, but when he turned back to Cliff the eyes had gone flinty again.

"You are Cliff Bogard?" It was more an accusation than a question, voiced in a tone that was deeply resonant, and Cliff caught the faint trace of an accent.

"That's right," Bogard answered.

"Why do you come here?"

"To open up the New Dixie rubber plantations."

"What makes you think you can do that?"

Bogard smiled. "What makes you think I can't?" He drew out a pack of cigarettes and offered it to the rider. Vicente shook his head. Cliff's unruffled acceptance of the situation seemed to disconcert him, and for a moment he stood frowning and hesitant; then again the deep voice rumbled: "Three weeks ago another one came here for rubber. I warned him to go. He did not go. Have you heard what happened?"

"You ran him out. I bought his warehouse and machinery."

"You wasted your money. You will never use it."

"Why not?"

"We do not want you in the Blacklands. That is our home."

Bogard lit his cigarette. "I don't quite see what you have to do with me. The plantations belong to the people of New Dixie, and I have an option on that rubber. I brought a big crew of men for this job, and I made a contract with the United States Government. I can't turn around now and tell them the deal's off just because you don't want it that way. My country is in a jam because it can't get enough rubber, and this is a job that has to be done."

Cliff spoke slowly and very quietly, but his own voice held an overtone of decision that brought a glint to Vicente's eyes and caused Lilli to look up anxiously.

"Vin," she urged, "he's not here to do you any harm. I just know he's not."

VICENTE'S FROWN TOLD plainly how little he relished her plea in Bogard's behalf. Then, with a kind of savage earnestness, he spoke. "I have not come to argue, but I tell you this: We do not want roads and bridges that will open up our Blacklands to the outside world. For us the jungle means safety and a way of life that we have chosen—everything that roads and the scum of the outside world would destroy. My chief has ordered me to warn you of these things, and so I have warned you. Even now it will not be too late." Vicente raised his hand toward the river. "Give me your word to go back on the next plane, and I will leave you in peace."

"I can't do that," Bogard answered.

A long silence. Both men knew they had reached an impasse, and Vicente's eyes began smoldering again. "In that case, we will take ways to persuade you." He spoke almost regretfully. "They will not be pleasant ways, señor. Already my young men are angry because I was not harder with the one who came before you." The words were calmly spoken, but the intent so clear that Bogard gave up all thought Vicente might be bluffing.

"Aren't you trying to hold back the ocean? You threw the other fellow out, and what happened? I came. If you throw me out, someone else will come. As long as the world is starving for rubber, there will always be someone else—"

A bedlam of angry Spanish and English drowned his words, and behind them Pablo hurried up the trail, followed by a dozen horsemen. Sputtering, waving his hands in an ecstasy of indignation, the little pilot caught sight of Cliff, and promptly boiled over.

"What is it goes? I am taken from my own plane by these—" Seeing Vicente, he stopped; his black eyes widened at the enormous figure; then like a defiant sparrow he walked briskly up to the Blacklander. "Why do these vermin come into my plane?" he demanded in Spanish. "*Que va!* Am I some cheap smuggler of rifles, or—"

Cliff laid a restraining hand on his friend's shoulder. "Easy, Pablo, old son," he warned.

But Pablo's wrath had carried him far beyond the dictates of caution. He shook a tobacco-stained finger in Vicente's face. "Clumsy, heavy-hoofed donkeys, they tramp on the wings, they open up the hood. Do these *malcriados* take my plane for an ox-cart?"

Vicente's huge right hand reached out, fastened in Pablo's shirt, and effortlessly lifted him from the ground.

"For your size you make much noise," he growled, and a deep laugh rolled among his riders.

At sight of the little pilot squirming in midair, a wave of anger swept Bogard, and forgetful of his own need for caution, he took a step forward.

"Put him down," he said.

Only Vicente's lips moved. "I have still another hand. Shall I lift you too?"

Cliff's eyes tightened. *"Put him down!"*

They were standing within arm's-length. Cliff saw Vicente shift his weight slightly, saw the huge hand move toward him, while on the trail behind them the Blackland riders sat their horses, watching, tense with expectancy. For barely a heartbeat that silent tableau endured; then suddenly a figure swept past Cliff; and Lilli, with small hands clenched, frowned up into Vicente's face.

"Vin, you quit this." The slant eyes were snapping. "You stop your bullyin', hear me!"

For a second there was no response; then to Bogard's astonishment, a look of reluctant submission came to Vicente's face, and very slowly he put Pablo on the ground.

More like an irate sparrow than ever, the outraged pilot straightened his tie, but Vicente had wholly forgotten him; he turned to Cliff, and once again the big Blacklander's eyes were flinty.

"Come with me." He mounted his horse, and Cliff followed him back to Wade's.

The place was swarming. Horsemen, tanned and lean, crowded the clearing—a strangely assorted band, of all ages, some scarcely more than boys, others grizzled and wrinkled with years of tropical sun. Most of them seemed to be North American; but in some black eyes and high-arched noses told of Spanish blood. At Vicente's approach they moved aside, and Cliff saw Janet Norman in the doorway.

Vicente saw her too, and with a quick exclamation he stopped—plainly the presence of a woman came as an unexpected complication. For a moment he gazed down upon her, then said to Cliff: "You and your wife—"

But Janet interrupted him with vehemence. "I'm not his wife. I'm Janet Norman. I—"

"Norman!' Sharply Vicente echoed the word in angry disbelief. "Are you Dr. Roberto Norman's daughter?"

"Yes. Of course."

To Cliff it seemed that a look, a flash of sudden comprehension, passed over the Blacklander's face; and still holding her with his eyes, he murmured: "So you are Roberto Norman's daughter."

"Did you know my father?" Blood had surged to Janet's cheeks, and she spoke the words as if speech had become difficult.

"Once—long ago." This time the silence grew long; at last he asked: "What do you want here, señorita?"

"I am going to New Dixie."

PERPLEXED, LIKE ONE dealing with an unaccustomed problem, Vicente dismounted, and walking a few paces away, stood with his back toward her, lost in speculation. At last he turned. "Why should I stop you? Go where you wish. But this man—he comes with us. We do not want him in the Blacklands."

The circle of riders had begun closing about Cliff, but Janet raised her hand.

"Wait!" She spoke the word breathlessly, as if appalled at her own temerity. "He is not going to the Blacklands—he is going to New Dixie with me."

Vicente frowned. "Why do you lie to me, señorita? This man is here to take rubber from the Blacklands plantations."

"But first he must get permission. It may be refused. It was refused before." She forced herself on, in a kind of hurried desperation. "Why do you risk trouble by meddling with an American citizen on his way to New Dixie?"

Distrust shadowed Vicente's face. "It was told to me that he was ready to begin work in the Blacklands."

"Nothing is ready. I can say that truly." Janet's voice shook with eagerness to convince Vicente of Bogard's dubious status. She took a step closer to the big Blacklander, and very slowly she added: "If he goes back on the next plane, I must go with him. But I don't want to go. I want to stay. You knew my father. He—" She stopped, and among the circle of riders, every eye had fixed on their leader. Some new idea seemed to be forming in Vicente's mind—as if from Janet's words had come a better way of dealing with this intruder.

Walking to where Bogard stood, he looked down at him with those tawny, unfriendly eyes.

"You can go to New Dixie," he began, and a growl of anger passed among the riders. "What you do in New Dixie is not my concern. But do not come to the Blacklands—ever."

Bogard heard no more. He was conscious of one thing alone: the first obstacle had been removed. He could go on to New Dixie. Why it should be so, he had no least notion, and he did not care. It was enough to know—

THEN HE REALIZED that Vicente was speaking again, and with an effort brought his attention back.

"Before I let you go," Vicente said, "you will promise you will tell no one—no one at all—that you saw me and my men today."

There was no choice. "I promise," Bogard said.

Vicente mounted, but his eyes had passed again to Janet's face, and for a fleeting instant those two held what might have been a silent communion; then, followed by his riders, Vicente turned away.

As the last of the riders disappeared, Wade peered cautiously from the shack. "Well, that's over." His face beamed relief. "Now, if they aint monkeyed with our horses, we can start for New Dixie." He turned to Pablo. "You comin' with us?"

The pilot shook his head. "I stay by the plane. Those *malcriados*, they may come back."

Anxious to be off, Cliff followed Pablo down to the dock to get his knapsack, leaving Wade alone with Janet.

The little hunter grinned happily. "Vicente kind of changed his tune when he found out you was Dr. Norman's girl. It's like I always say—people stood around for the Doctor when he was alive." He stopped, and his smile vanished. "Why, you're shakin', Miss Janet!"

Unsteadily she answered: "I'm frightened."

He laid a wrinkled hand on her arm. "There aint nothin' to be scared of now. Vicente's gone."

"It's not Vicente I'm afraid of—it's Mr. Bogard. I'm supposed to help him get his rubber out of the Blacklands. That's why I'm here."

"Help him!" Wade's voice was mildly incredulous. "Why, you never saw the Blacklands, did you?"

"Never. But in Washington they thought I did. It was the only way I could get a passport to come back. I even wrote a letter telling Mr. Bogard to put himself in my hands, and I signed it with the name of the rubber chief." As if astonished at her own sinfulness, she added: "That's forgery, Wade."

"It sure is. But why did you do it?"

"I had to come here. Don't ask me why—I just had to; and if Mr. Bogard finds out, I'll have to go back."

"Even if he don't find out, Claribel's almost sure to kick him out again. Then what happens to you?"

"I'll have to go with him." Suddenly her two hands clenched. "And I won't go. I want to stay here, more than anything in the world. I *have* to stay."

Wade's eyes were soft with sympathy. "It aint goin' to be very easy for you to stay here, since your father's gone. Things'll be different. It's just that Dr. Norman always sort of shielded you. And besides, Claribel don't like you—she never liked you since her nephew followed you back to the States."

Janet tried, not too successfully, to smile. "What makes it worse, he doesn't like me, either."

"Who?"

"Mr. Bogard. He's almost sure I'm a humbug."

Helplessly Wade cleared his throat. "If there's anything I can do—anything at all—you just tell me."

She saw the sympathy in his faded, kindly eyes, and for an instant her own eyes lost their hunted look. "Thanks, old friend." Then with an effort at calmness she asked: "Did Father ever talk to you about this Vicente?"

"I wouldn't remember. But I do remember that Vicente was in our party when we found where your father camped the night he drowned. Fact is, Vicente found it. Hammock, instruments—everything was there after the flood passed."

Once again he saw the shadow of fear cloud her face.

"I don't understand what it's all about, Miss Janet," he said unhappily; "but if there's anything I can do—anything at all—" He stopped, for Bogard had entered the clearing.

Obviously anxious to get Cliff off his hands, Wade hurried out after the horses; and ten minutes later, they started through the dripping jungle, Janet and Cliff mounted on two sturdy ponies, Wade himself leading a pack-horse bearing their bags. Steadily the trail rose from the valley, while stunted oak began taking the place of palms; and soon they were riding through open patches of grassland, where the footing was firmer and the air fresher; jungle had given way to a land of eternal spring.

Once Janet reined in her horse and beckoned to Cliff. "Let me show you something," she said; and leaving the main trail, led him out along a rocky ridge.

He gave an involuntary exclamation of surprise. They were on the peak of a sheer promontory, and thousands of feet below them, like a shining ribbon, the river flowed slow and deep between high jungle banks, then broke into a series of rapids. To the north, above the rapids, the country opened up into a wide, fertile valley, shrouded in mist too thick to penetrate.

"Up there," Janet said, "are your Blacklands." And Cliff knew that somewhere in that misty valley lay the famous plantations he had come so far to see.

A lonely, sky-filled place—from that dizzy height the world lay spread out like a great colored map, the lush, velvety green of the jungle fading back to a purple haze; and Cliff could hear the low moaning of the wind beneath him.

"It's lovely, isn't it?" Janet exclaimed. "It was here Father always liked to stop and rest."

CLIFF POINTED DOWN to a spot where, just below the rapids, stood a low, squat building on the river-bank. "What's that?" he asked.

Janet shook her head, and it was Wade who answered. "That's the warehouse the other rubber fellow built. And over there is the hangar Pablo uses for his plane. There's a trail all along the river—you can't see it from here—it's been worn smooth and flat by the Indians for nobody knows how long. . . . Well, we better be gettin' along. The sun's kind of low."

Then abruptly Wade leaned forward in his saddle and pointed almost directly down. Dwarfed to toys by distance, a group of horsemen was fording the stream.

"Vicente's riders." The hunter wiped his shining forehead with a blue handkerchief the size of a small tablecloth. "They're up to something—they haven't been down this far in years."

Cliff's eyes followed the little cavalcade until it crossed the river; then he asked: "Why did Vicente make me promise to keep mum about his being here?"

Wade chuckled. "I guess he figured that if the New Dixie vaqueros found out he was in the valley, they might try to catch him. The vaqueros been wantin' to lay hands on Vicente for some time."

For another mile they rode steadily, making better progress over the level trail, until at a turn they emerged suddenly upon a rolling plateau, and Cliff looked up with a thrill of glad surprise—just ahead lay New Dixie.

Chapter Four

BATHED in late afternoon sunlight, it might have been a village in the States. Over a hundred houses, freshly kept and gleaming white, dotted the plateau, each cottage fronted by cool, fresh lawns, and trim picket fences. Lofty trees, that looked like elms, shaded the streets; and the smoke of a hundred chimneys rose straight up, pencil-thin on the still air. Once, softened by distance, came the sound of a dog barking. To Cliff, it was as if a segment of the old South had been transplanted bodily to this peaceful sun-strewn upland.

Behind the village, and a short distance above it, stood a house larger than the rest, with tall white pillars and spacious lawns; and at sight of it Cliff felt the quickened beat of his heart—in the center of the lawn floated an American flag.

Suddenly elated, he stood up in his stirrups. "It's like being back in the States!"

"That's Claribel's house," Wade said. He reined in his horse. "You-all won't need me no longer. Claribel and me don't sing in none too close harmony these days, so I'll be gettin' along." He shook hands, but his eyes lingered on the girl's face. "If there's anything, anything at all—" he murmured, and turned down the trail.

Skirting the upper fringe of the village, Janet and Cliff dismounted at the white-pillared house. On both sides of the entrance were a number of metal plates, each embossed with the great seal of a foreign nation, and curiously Bogard read, *"Vice Consul of Great Britain. Vice Consul, United States of America."*

"Do all these Government officials work here?" he asked.

Janet laughed. "These officials are all Claribel." She knocked; and a pale, pleasant-faced woman opened the door.

"We got Miss Janet's radio," she said. "Miss Claribel's up in her room with one of her headaches. She'll see you tomorrow morning, and you're to make yourself comfortable meanwhile. I'll show you your rooms."

Cliff's room was cheerful and sunny, with dormer windows and gayly colored chintz. The bathroom, almost as large as the bedroom itself, held a huge old-fashioned tub, and dubiously he turned a spigot. A stream of warm water gushed out, and in high delight he began shedding his clothes. The next half-hour passed in pure luxury. He bathed, shaved and dressed, then realizing how hungry he was, went out in search of Janet.

He found her waiting in the lower hall, and hardly recognized her. Bright with the setting sun, a window framed her head and shoulders, and at his entrance she turned toward him. She had changed to a dress of soft blue; the bronze hair was swept upward from her neck and temples, high-lighted by the blazing sky of evening; and her eyes in that brief second, no longer wary, were dark and warm.

Seeing her standing there, Cliff thought, "She could be really beautiful if—" If what? He didn't know.

Their eyes met, and Cliff could see the old wariness returning. "Dinner's ready," she said.

Cliff was ready too. It was a meal typical of the South American tropics—avocados, sapotes, and honey-flavored tortillas, served by two barefoot Indian girls. A silent meal, for both were busy with their own thoughts; but once, conscious of the long silence, Janet said, "It seems so strange to be back in this room. I never thought I'd see it again."

"Did you live in New Dixie?"

"Father did, for years. I just visited when I wasn't in school."

"Where did you go to school?"

"Father sent me to a convent—it was very strict."

That, Cliff told himself, might account for many things, but aloud he asked: "How did this place get started?"

"A man named Florian founded it before the Civil War. He bought a grant from the Government for two million acres; then he went back to New Orleans and organized an expedition—most of them young couples from the South, looking for adventure. They set sail in two square-riggers, and it must have been a heart-breaking trip—they ran out of water twice, and nearly lost one of the ships in a hurricane.

"But the colony was a success from the start. The plateau is free of cattle ticks, and Florian brought pure-bred cattle. Today New Dixie cattle get fancy prices all along the coast."

"What happened after Florian died?"

"His son ran it—and now his granddaughter, Claribel. She owns over half the land herself. People say she's the most able of all the Florians. They're a domineering family, and intolerant of outside interference."

"Why did they start to grow rubber?"

"They didn't want to depend entirely on cattle. The Blacklands were no good for grazing, but the best grade of native rubber in South America grew wild in the forests. Malaria was the big problem—nobody could live there; so twenty years ago they called in Father, and after years of work he drained the Blacklands and wiped out malaria. Then they planted thousands of acres to rubber, but the rubber boom collapsed, and they could never find a market for it."

Cliff grunted. "I brought them a market on a silver platter, and look what happened to me!"

"Maybe they didn't like your platter," she suggested.

DUSK WAS COMING ON as they finished dinner, and he followed Janet into a large candle-lit room with high ceilings and white tiled floor.

"This is Claribel's office," she said.

One end of the room was taken up by a long mahogany table; to the left stood a large piano, and on the walls hung a dozen pictures, dark with age. Against the window was a huge hand-carved desk, littered with papers, and the empty chair behind it was worn with long use. From a perch above the desk a brilliantly plumed macaw looked morosely down at them.

Janet touched the keys of the piano—it had a fragile, muted quality. "I used to play for my father on this very piano when we came to see Claribel."

"What was your father like?"

She glanced quickly up. "He was big and—exciting, and red-headed—not dark red like mine; his was really fiery." Janet's voice and eyes had come suddenly alive. "He had a terrific temper too, but with sick people or with children he was tender as a woman. The Indians back in the jungle adored him. He was the kind of man who was either your enemy or your friend—there was never any middle way."

"What happened to him?"

"He went on a field trip in the flood season, and—never came back." Abruptly she rose, and moving to the window, stood looking down over the broad sloping plateau toward the village, lost in memories.

He walked to her side. "I think there's one thing you should do tonight—you ought to tell somebody that Vicente and his riders are in the neighborhood."

"But we promised not to," she protested.

"*I* promised—not you. You weren't asked to promise. Wade said these New Dixie people don't get along with the Blacklanders, and if anything happens that you could have prevented—"

She shook her head. "I wouldn't do that. Let's not even talk about it."

He could see her mind was closed to the idea. "Have it your own way—but it might look as if you were trying to stand in with Vicente. I don't want to give them any excuse to throw me out again—this job means too much to me."

He could feel her drawing into herself again. "Don't you think I know how much this job means to you, Mr. Bogard?" she asked.

"No, I don't." The panicky resentment flared up in her eyes, but Cliff went slowly on: "All you know is that if I don't get this job, I go broke. That's true. I'll lose my shirt, and so will the friends who backed me, but that's not the important thing."

The deep voice ceased, and for a moment his eyes seemed to brood on the night outside. He roused himself. "I had a partner down in the Argentine. He came out with me when we left the States, and we worked together for five years. Went broke together too. He was the one who first got me interested in the New Dixie plantations, so we decided he would come up and look it over. A week before he left, I got a telephone call warning me that he would get into trouble if he went ahead with the rubber deal. Argentina is full of people working against the United States, and we didn't take the warning very seriously." Soberly Cliff added: "I wish we had."

"Why?"

"He was found dead the morning before he was to fly here. He'd been shot."

Cliff moved about the room, then once again his low, deep voice went on: "That partner of mine left a wife and daughter down in the Argentine; and if I don't put this job through, they may not eat regularly. If I do put it through, I'll feel that I'm carrying out the thing he wanted to do and couldn't. I'm telling you all this, Miss Norman, so that you'll understand how important it is that we don't make any mistakes."

She sat watching him; then as if his words had brought her to a sudden decision, she braced herself. "It's important to me too," she said. "I want to stay here."

The idea caught him by surprise. "Isn't your work finished when you get me started?"

"I want to stay here," she repeated, "and to do that, I need a job with you."

"Do you know anything about rubber?"

She flushed. "Do you think they would have sent me if I didn't?"

HE STUDIED HER until the color flooded her cheeks and the old resentment came back to her eyes.

"You're stalling, Miss Norman," he said at last. "You don't know anything about rubber—I found that out on the plane coming down. And I don't believe you really care a damn about rubber. There's no place for a woman in this work, and I don't want people around me just to be decorative."

Her eyes flashed. "Why don't you say what you really mean, Mr. Bogard? You don't trust me."

Unperturbed by the angry outburst, he answered: "I don't trust you, because I don't know what your game is. I like all the cards on the table; and for some reason you've been keeping half of them up your sleeve. So before we talk about a job for you, let's see what happens tomorrow. Right now your job is to help me get started."

She answered evenly: "The trouble with you is you just don't like women."

He gave a short laugh. "I can do without the executive type, if that's what you mean."

"And I can do without your offensive arrogance." Her whole body stiffened, she crossed the room to the stairs, then turned. "Whatever you think of me isn't important; but for both our sakes, let me do the talking tomorrow. That's all I ask of you—leave it to me. Good night."

Her footsteps died away, and from the perch behind him Cliff heard the macaw's derisive squawk. Walking to the window, he lighted a cigarette. "Leave it to me." She was a frightened girl, trying to hide her incompetence beneath a cloak of assumed authority. Yet he had to depend on her. "Leave it to me," she had said.

"The hell of it is," he confided to the macaw, "there's nothing else I *can* do."

CHAPTER FIVE

THE sun was streaming in the window when Cliff Bogard awoke. The air felt like spring, and he jumped from bed, conscious that his nerves were singing with the excitement of knowing that the next few hours should decide his fate.

Once again the elaborate plumbing fulfilled its promise of hot water; and dressing quickly, he ran downstairs. Janet, they told him, was having breakfast in her room; so Cliff finished his coffee and warm rolls, then walked back to Claribel's office.

Except for the macaw, it was empty. Through the window he looked down over the village, where two boys were driving a herd of milch cows to pasture; and from every chimney smoke was rising. Peace and tranquillity and a sense of quiet, unhurried living pervaded the scene, and he felt a glow of pleasure as he looked down over the little checkerboard village and the lush green hills beyond.

"Good morning!" Janet slipped through the doorway. "Claribel's up. She'll be here any minute." Her voice trembled a little, and she began moving nervously about the room. He saw her fingers twisting at her handkerchief; and sudden fear for her seized him—now of all times there was no place for nerves.

Casually he suggested: "Maybe you better let me handle the old battle-ax."

"That's just what I don't want! Please! Oh, please, keep out of it."

He walked away. They were both getting edgy.

Upstairs a door slammed. He saw Janet start, and crushing out his cigarette, walked over to the macaw. The bird blinked at him solemnly from its high perch, then lowering its head, sidled gingerly toward him; and smiling, Cliff raised his hand. "Want the old top-knot scratched?"

In a very ecstasy of indignation, the macaw uttered a shrill metallic scream, and at that moment the door opened.

"Young man," a voice rasped, "stop pestering that bird!"

Claribel had arrived.

Taller than most men, she would have commanded attention anywhere. An erect, deep-bosomed woman in the sixties, her square chin, high-arched nose and wide-spaced cold blue eyes attested an enormous inner vitality. Everything about her was vigorous; she seemed to dominate even the huge room.

Hand on the knob, she scowled briefly at Cliff; then her blue eyes searched Janet's face.

The girl came slowly forward. "Remember me, Claribel?"

"Certainly I remember you." The contralto voice had lost its sharpness, but Cliff could detect no great warmth of welcome. "I'd remember your hair anywhere. Used to wonder what you did to keep it that color."

Her eyes returned to Cliff; and Janet said: "This is Mr. Bogard."

A smile of sardonic amusement touched the woman's lips. "I remember him too. When I had him shipped out of here, he left word that I was an opinionated female pachyderm. He didn't like the way I ran things. Well, lots of folks don't."

She marched to her desk. Decisiveness was in her very stride; even when seated, she held herself erect. Now she looked briskly up.

"Well, what brings you back, Janet?"

"Rubber, Claribel."

"Oh, rubber." Her eyes went back to Cliff Bogard. "That's what he wanted—and didn't get. Maybe you thought *you* could get around the old lady?"

"I'm not trying to get around you. You have as much to gain as anyone else. The United States needs rubber, and they'll pay you more than you ever hoped for. They'll do all the work. They only want your permission to bring in American labor and American boats. They'll build the camps and roads; they'll take every bit of the risk."

Claribel was tapping the desk impatiently. "Young lady, you've taken a mighty long trip to tell me something I already know. Now let me tell *you* something: One month ago a man came up here with the same story as yours—he wanted to buy our rubber. I gave him an option, and sent him with some of my boys to look over the plantations. What happened? The Blacklanders jumped them and ran him out.

"Every time outsiders go back there, we have trouble; and last week the Government warned me that if things boil over with the Blacklanders again, they'll send soldiers up here. And I don't want soldiers—they're like locusts. I don't want New Dixie turned into an armed camp; and if I let you bring in American workers, and one of them—just one—gets into trouble, I'd have a garrison of hungry troops on my hands."

"But why should an American get into trouble?"

"Haven't the least idea—but they manage to. My job is to keep order in New Dixie, and if I don't, the Government will. That rubber option isn't worth the risk."

"But Madison always said—"

Claribel cut her short. "Madison would say anything you put him up to. You'll have to think up a better reason than Madison."

JANET TOOK A STEP FORWARD. "I can think of a better reason, Claribel."

"What is it?"

"Your promise."

Cliff had not moved; but now unconsciously he stiffened, for a deeper note in Janet's voice and the way she raised her face told him she was playing her last card.

"Claribel," Janet went on more slowly, "I know you don't like me—you've told me so. Ever since Madison wanted to marry me, you've been terrified I'd take him away from New Dixie; but when he followed me to the States, you wrote me that if I'd send him back, you'd do anything I asked. Didn't you?"

The old lady scowled. "Oh, I—"

"Didn't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, I sent him back. It didn't matter to you whether I wanted him or not—it didn't occur to you that I might have loved Madison. All you were thinking of was getting your nephew back to help you run New Dixie. You got him back, Claribel. Now what about your promise?"

She stopped, and Cliff searched her face in puzzled wonder. Everything about her signaled that she was fighting in the last ditch and knew it, but she was fighting with a cool desperation he never thought she possessed.

"Claribel, when Father wiped malaria out of the Blacklands, I heard you tell him in this very room how grateful everyone in New Dixie should be to him. He made it possible for you to grow those rubber plantations, and he'd want his country to have the use of them."

CLARIBEL MOVED IMPATIENTLY. "The point is the Blacklanders don't—"

"The Blacklanders loved Father just as dearly as the people of New Dixie loved him," Janet interrupted. "Think of the months he spent working with them in the fever season. If they knew his daughter wanted this, I don't believe the Blacklanders would interfere. Give us a chance, Claribel. If a promise means anything, you've got to give us a chance."

The voice ceased, the words trailed into silence, while with stubby fingers Claribel drummed on the desk. At last she picked up a pencil and turned it in her hand. "It's a risk, it's a crazy risk," she muttered, and abruptly she threw the pencil down. "A promise is a promise." Then as if repenting her compliance, she added fiercely: "Now listen here! If I let this Mr. What's-his-name—Bogard—go back there, and the Blacklanders show the first sign of trouble, I'll pull you out of those plantations so fast it'll make your eyes pop."

Cliff could feel the quickened beat of his heart—she was about to say yes!

But now she stopped. Down in the village a bell had begun tolling, and Claribel half rose from her chair. Through the window Cliff saw men racing across the fields; and just outside the house a rider came galloping up the path. Almost before the horse had halted, the man jumped from the saddle and burst into the room.

"Miss Claribel,"—he panted the words,—"Vicente's gang burned that rubber warehouse last night and dumped everything into the river. They may be heading this way. They were down at Wade's yesterday afternoon."

"Wade's!" Claribel's eyes fixed on Janet. "Didn't you come up from Wade's yesterday?"

Janet's head moved in an almost imperceptible nod.

"Didn't you hear anything of them?" Claribel persisted.

"Yes." It was a whisper. "We saw them."

"You saw them, and you deliberately kept it to yourself!" Wrathfully Claribel's hand banged down on the desk. "For all of you, they might have raided the town!" In mounting anger she whirled toward Bogard. "Do you know what that raid means? It means the Blacklanders are serving notice they don't want you around—and if they don't want you, neither do I." Thinly the woman smiled. "That junk they threw in the river belonged to your late lamented predecessor."

"No," Cliff corrected gently, "it belonged to me."

Claribel pried her huge bulk out of the chair and glowered at the messenger. "Send a rider to bring in Madison and the vaqueros," she ordered. "Then go down and tell Pablo Ramirez to get his plane ready—he's taking two passengers back to the coast."

Her eyes, colder than ice, returned to Janet. "I don't know what you're up to, young lady; but I've never trusted you. You made a fool of Madison; you won't make a fool of me. I'll give you and this Bogard person just ten minutes to pack."

The door slammed after her.

Slowly Cliff straightened. For a second swift anger shook him. If Janet had taken his advice— He had urged her to tell them about Vicente, but she had known best. Always she knew best!

As if from very far away he heard the strident jeering of the macaw; then dimly he was conscious of Janet's stricken face looking up at him.

His lips moved swiftly. "Well, you said to leave it to you." He drew a long breath. "Congratulations!"

Chapter Six

TURNING on his heel, Bogard walked to the window. Down in the village the bell still tolled its warning; crowds had gathered in the street; and at the far end of the pasture men were frantically saddling horses. A low sigh beside him recalled Janet, and at thought of her he felt his anger revive.

She looked up at him. "What are we going to do now?" she whispered. "What can we do?"

"We're going to pack." In the quiet room his voice sounded sharper than he intended. "Why don't you face it? You're through."

"*Through.*" Blankly she echoed the word, then in the next breath blazed up at him in a flare of unhappy anger: "And you're glad I'm through! Why don't you say it? You wanted to believe that no woman on earth knew enough to help you."

"You haven't done much to change my mind."

She raised both hands to her lips. "I never want to see you—" She started for the door, but his own hand closed on her arm.

"Wait! Quarreling won't get us anywhere," he said slowly. "What about this Madison? Who is he?"

"Claribel's nephew. Let go of my arm."

Cliff's hand dropped. "Where does he fit in?"

"He manages everything for Claribel—especially the herds of cattle. He's head of the vaqueros."

"He seems to be a trained seal where you're concerned. From what our charming hostess just said, you have plenty of influence with him."

She frowned. "What about it? He isn't here."

"But you heard her send a rider to bring him in. You must know someone here who will get word to Madison that you're down at Wade's."

"He couldn't possibly arrive before the plane leaves."

"It's worth a chance, isn't it? What have we got to lose?" He half pushed her toward the door. "Try it. And if the old steam-roller comes back, I'll delay things."

Hope—even the faint hope that lay in his words—brought a touch of color to Janet's cheeks. She ran from the room, and Cliff watched her hurry down the path.

A few minutes later Claribel stamped in.

"You still here?" she snapped.

"Still here, darling."

They eyed each other as two fencers might.

There was a directness and vitality about her that, in spite of his anger, gave Cliff a sense of kinship with the high-handed old matriarch. He decided to make one last effort. "When I rode up to this house yesterday," his slow voice drawled, "the first thing I saw was the American flag. That gave me a big thrill. I had a feeling that whoever flew that flag would be glad to help the U. S. A. out of the tightest pinch she's ever known."

"Still talking about rubber, are you?" Claribel began, gathering up the papers on her desk.

"I am. So is the whole world. Just now, rubber is almost as important as food, especially the high-grade stuff on the New Dixie plantations. I wanted to get that rubber and send it back to the United States, more than anything I ever wanted in my life. And when I saw that flag, I thought I could count on your help."

Claribel lifted a stubby hand. "Before we all join in singing the national anthem, let me remind you that I'm responsible for what happens here—not you. Under other circumstances I would have let you take all the rubber you wanted; but today the Blacklanders have a leader who has already done away with some of my vaqueros, and I'll take no chances of starting a general feud with them."

"Then why don't you haul down that American flag and hoist a white one? You make me ashamed—an American woman bluffed by a handful of bandits."

He expected the blue eyes to glisten, but instead she gave a throaty chuckle. "You wouldn't be trying to rile an old lady into changing her mind, would you, Bogard? It's your kind that stirs up most of the world's troubles."

"I'd hate to spend my life dodging trouble."

"From all I've heard, you spend it looking for trouble—and I must say you're in good company."

"You mean Miss Norman?"

"Who else? That girl's a menace."

Cliff laughed. "She's a rabbit if I ever saw one."

This time Claribel's blue eyes snapped. "As a judge of human nature, you're no better than most men. Janet Norman is a thoroughly cold-blooded, calculating minx—just the kind you men go off the deep end for. Madison's been perfectly ridiculous about her for years—and she encouraged him. When she went back to the States, she got him to follow her, and when I told her I'd cut him off without a penny if he married her, she dropped him like a hot potato and sent him back. That's the kind of rabbit she is. Not that it ever did a man any good to warn him about a woman."

With a gesture of finality the old lady pointed out the window. "Those two horses are waiting for you and your little bunny. Also, there's a man ready to guide you to the plane, so begin packing."

Cliff started up the stairs—he had gained a little time, and every minute might count. "Do you mind if I take a look at the warehouse on the way down?" he called to her. "I'd like to see if Vicente left anything worth salvaging."

"Why not? The lower trail passes it—and the sooner you get going, the better."

Cliff had just finished throwing his belongings into a bag when Janet came running upstairs, breathless with exertion.

"A friend of Father's promised to give Madison my message," she whispered to Cliff. "Is there anything else I can do?"

"Nothing." He snapped the suitcase closed. "From now on, we fight a delaying action and pray that your boy-friend shows up."

"He's not my—" she began angrily, then broke off as she saw his smile. "I suppose Claribel told you that."

"She intimated that you were quite a siren." He picked up the suitcase. "Ready?"

ESCORTED BY A SANDY-HAIRED RIDER, they started back over the plateau, departing in dreary silence along the same trail they had ridden in such high hopes less than twenty-four hours ago. But just before they lost sight of the village, Cliff turned for a last look back, and saw a little cloud of dust rising where a group of horsemen hurried at a fast trot toward the east.

Their guide grinned. "The boys are goin' to see if they can cut Vicente off." He pointed to a trail leading at right angles from their own. "This takes us by the warehouse you wanted to see."

But Janet reined in. "I'm terribly tired," she told the guide, and her white face testified to her words. "Do you mind if I go straight on to Wade's?"

"No, ma'am—just so you'll be ready to leave when we get there."

"I'll be ready."

She rode on alone, and Cliff followed his guide down the steep, muddy trail.

An hour later the smell of smoke told him they were close to the scene of last night's raid, and at the next turn in the trail he saw what had once been the warehouse—now a mass of twisted corrugated iron and a few charred timbers. Fragments of machinery and broken crates littered the ground; tools, lathes and three small tractors were shattered in an orgy of destruction. Four hundred bags of cement listed on the bill of sale had completely disappeared—probably the river held the answer.

The guide looked about him in disgust. "Just ornery cussedness, that's what it is. Just plain Blacklander meanness."

Cliff did not reply. He knew Vicente's act was motivated by more than mere lust for destruction—this had been Vicente's way of warning Claribel to keep Bogard out of the Blacklands. And how it had succeeded!

One glance at the gutted warehouse told him there was nothing worth saving; but every minute might bring Madison nearer, and so, dismounting, Cliff drew out a notebook and began making a meticulous inventory of every piece of wrecked equipment, while his guide wandered restlessly along the river-bank. Not until a full hour later did they start again for Wade's.

It was early afternoon when they reached the clearing, and at the sound of their approach, Wade and Pablo came to the door of the shack. Sympathy was written on the little pilot's face as he took Bogard's arm. "So once again you get the brush-off, no?"

Cliff nodded. "I should have bought a round-trip ticket." He looked down at Wade. "Do you suppose we could get a bite to eat before we go?"

But Pablo glanced uneasily at his watch. "Claribel has sent word I should get you and the señorita out pronto, or what happens to me is plenty."

"Where's Miss Norman?"

"On the plane, ready to go. I think we should better start."

Cliff picked up his luggage, and walked wearily out along the dock, where Janet stood beside the wing of Pablo's plane, dressed for travel, her little pile of bags and boxes at her feet.

Behind him he heard Wade say: "I'm right sorry you're goin' this soon, Miss Janet. But then I always said Claribel's a tough customer."

"Fortunes of war, Wade," she answered.

Cliff looked at her in quick surprise. Her voice sounded so serene, so completely reconciled to defeat. *Fortunes of war!* If she had listened to him, this Christian-martyr resignation might not have been necessary.

Cliff held out his hand to Wade. "Good-by," he said. "And tell Lilli good luck for me."

Pablo disappeared into the plane to warm up the motor; and as Cliff threw his suitcase inside, he heard the starter turn. The gears growled for a second, then stopped with a wheeze of protest. A short silence, another clash of gears; and this time Pablo's muffled voice began calling on a dozen saints. Motionless, Cliff listened. Something was up. From the cabin came the sound of metal slamming against metal, then a squeak of outrage, and Pablo's wrathful face emerged.

"Who mak' the monkey business?" Each hair of the tiny black mustache bristled with indignation.

Chapter Seven

WADE hurried over. "Somethin' wrong, Pablo?"

"Wrong?" The pilot was sputtering. "From my magneto someone take three dees-treeb—three dees-ta—" He gave it up.

"Distributor points?" Cliff offered.

"*Si.* Gone. Three of them, and *por Dios,* they do not walk away."

"Could be Vicente's gang," Wade suggested.

Pablo's growl might have implied anything, and Janet's placid voice broke the baffled silence: "Will the loss of those—those distributor things delay us?"

Cliff looked at her and quickly looked away. He heard Pablo answer with icy dignity: "Señorita, one does not fly without dees-treeb—without parts of the engine." He appealed to Wade. "Can I tak' the launch to go to the hangar?"

Wade caught Janet's glance and shook his head. "Launch aint workin', Pablo. I'll have to send you by canoe."

"Canoe! *Dios!* Three hours up, three hours back. And Claribel, she is on my neck like a mill-slab." Pablo's sense of the world's injustices began to grow eloquent. "What a country! On the coast they steal my gas—up here they tak' the plane apart!" But neither English nor Spanish seemed adequate, and he surveyed his two passengers in mute frustration.

Cliff tried to keep his voice casual: "When do we get away now?"

Pablo's shoulders raised. "If nobody run off with my wings, we leave tomorrow morning." Wrathfully the little pilot followed Wade to the canoe, and Cliff glanced at Janet. Her color rose as their eyes met.

"Nice going, lady," he murmured, and his voice was almost friendly.

SHE HAD SAVED THE DAY. Probably she had intended to take out those distributor points when she left him on the trail that morning; and uncomfortably Cliff admitted that his early appraisal of her might need some revision.

"Just before we left," Cliff said, "I told Claribel you were my idea of a rabbit. I take that back."

She laughed. "It's nice to know I'm not a rabbit."

"No. And I haven't the foggiest notion what you are."

"As a judge of human nature—"

"Don't say it," he interrupted. "Claribel told me already I wasn't doing so well. If you want to make a mystery of why you're here, it's all right with me. Anyone who could put Pablo's plane on the sick-list the way you did doesn't have to explain anything."

She gave a little nod that might have meant thanks, and turned toward the plane. "Now that we're spending the night here," she said, "I'd better get some clothes." She glanced toward the shore, and a faint smile came and went. "Here's someone else who is glad those distributor points walked away."

Janet swung down into the cabin of the plane, and Cliff looked up to see Lilli coming out to the wharf. She was carrying a cup that she offered him a little shyly.

"I made you some orange juice," she said.

While he drank, she slipped down beside him, but her face had gone so serious that Cliff asked: "What's wrong, Lilli? Trouble with your jaguar?"

"No, it's you. I just been talking with Sam."

"Who's Sam?"

"The rider who brought you from New Dixie. He says you don't want to go away from here, but Claribel says you got to."

Cliff nodded. "That would seem to cover it."

"Why do you want to stay?"

"I want to do a job."

"What kind of job?"

"Men call it opening up a country. It means work for hundreds of people, maybe thousands—building roads and camps and bringing ships in to send rubber back to the United States."

Lilli drew her tanned legs beneath her. "You could stay if you wanted." Her voice had fallen to a murmur.

"How?"

"I could hide you. I know places in the jungle that nobody knows. I could bring you food, I could—" She stopped; her slant eyes resolutely refused to meet his. "I could be with you whenever you wanted me. No one would ever find you."

Her voice was so eager it trembled, and Cliff laid his hand on hers. "You're a grand kid, Lilli. But it wouldn't work, and you might get into trouble."

"I wouldn't care."

"Why not?"

"Because—" She stopped, as if overwhelmed at her own temerity. "It's because I so want you to stay."

The strong, deep lines of his face softened. "You're a darling, Lilli, but just hiding in the jungle wouldn't get me anywhere, and it wouldn't be so good for you. Your old pal Vicente might raise objections."

Again she said simply: "I wouldn't care."

Suddenly self-conscious, Cliff said: "Vicente's in love with you, you know."

Her eyes had gone shadowy. "Why do you say that? Vin doesn't come here hardly any more since he started fighting the vaqueros."

A sound from the jungle brought Cliff to his feet.

"It's horses," Lilli said.

Faint at first, then closer, came the pounding of many horses' hoofs, followed by the sound of men's voices.

"Blacklanders?" Cliff asked.

Lilli shook her head. "Those horses are shod. The Blacklanders never shoe their horses. They're vaqueros."

Inside the plane Janet also had heard, and climbed out of the cabin. "If only it's Madison!" she exclaimed.

Together the three hurried up the bank. Wade's clearing was alive with horsemen crowding about the shack, all of them wearing the garb of the cattle ranges—leather boots, broad belts, and wide-brimmed hats. Each man carried in his belt the short, thick knife of the jungle herdsman, and from every saddle-horn hung a coiled reata. Big men, most of them, brown and lean from hard riding, they sat their horses with swagger; and as Cliff approached, he heard Wade say: "Hello, Sloan. What's the excitement?"

A burly man, evidently the leader, called jubilantly from his horse: "Vicente's gang bit off more than they could chew when they raided the warehouse last night. We caught up with 'em this side of the Britton ranch." With his quirt Sloan pointed to the edge of the clearing, then raised his voice in a laugh: "And look who's our guest of honor."

Lilli saw him first. With a cry of dismay she pushed her way through the throng of riders, for out of the shadows Vicente came riding his great black horse. His hat was gone; both hands were tied together and lashed to the saddle-horn; dust streaked his face, and the sleeve of his shirt was ripped and dark with blood.

He gave no sign of recognition, but sat his horse in stony silence, eyes fixed on the jungle.

Again Sloan laughed. "And this is the gent who bragged he was goin' to drive us all out of the upper ranges." He turned to Wade. "I figger to hold him here tonight. We can lock him in one of your empty cages for safekeeping." Unfastening Vicente's hands, he jerked the thongs roughly. "Come on down, you. This is as far as you go."

As Vicente dismounted, Lilli ran toward him and touched his torn sleeve. "You hurt, Vin?" she asked.

The ghost of a smile moved over his dark face. "Not much," he answered. Head and shoulders above the crowd, he looked slowly about; suddenly he caught sight of Bogard, and with a growl like a wild thing, he took a swift step forward, and instinctively the ring of his captors drew back. Bogard alone did not move. He stood motionless, alert and watchful in the big man's path.

Chapter Eight

VICENTE raised a blood-smeared hand. "You broke your promise to me," the deep voice rumbled. "You told them I was down here." He straightened his huge frame. "Some day you will regret that. It may not be tomorrow—"

Sloan's hand had dropped to his knife. "Don't you worry none about tomorrow," he said. "Madison will take care of your tomorrows." To the vaqueros he called: "Take him down to the cages." Sloan loosened the cinch of his saddle. "Us boys'll make camp along the river," he told Wade. "And you might bring me a lantern—I'm spendin' the night personally outside this fellow's cage."

Janet's eyes, heavy with anguish, followed Vicente. "What will they do with him?" she asked.

"Depends on Claribel and Madison," Wade answered. "Madison would give a lot to find out where Vicente's chief hides out. They'll try to make Vicente talk, but I misdoubt they'll learn much."

And to Cliff Bogard it seemed Wade took a grim satisfaction in that knowledge. "What will they do after that?" he asked.

"Send him to the prison colony."

Janet shuddered. "Father used to tell me about the prison colony. It's ghastly."

FROM DOWN TOWARD the river came the low roar of Lilli's jaguar, and a tremor ran through Janet's body. "I can't stand the thought of a human being caged up like a wild animal."

"Some human beings can be dangerous animals," Cliff said thoughtfully.

"This one isn't. He's hurt—I mean hurt inside. Couldn't you tell that the first time you saw his eyes?"

"You're sorry for him because just now he happens to be the under-dog," he said.

With unexpected vehemence she burst out: "Maybe I am. Maybe it's because I know what it is to be the under-dog myself—to be afraid, and have to go on no matter how much you're afraid."

She turned away.

Lost in thought, Cliff watched her cross the clearing. "Maybe she *is* a rabbit," he told himself, "but she's fighting it every minute." He followed Wade into the shack.

The hunter was visibly disturbed. "I wish they wasn't keepin' Vicente here," he complained. "I want to stay clear of this, for if the Blacklanders find out Vicente's here, they'll be down on Sloan's men before dawn, and we'll be in the middle of an ugly fight. Madison and Sloan think I'm too thick with Vicente as it is, because him and Lilli has always been friends. Lilli's about the only person in the world Vicente trusts."

"Did Miss Norman know Vicente when she lived in New Dixie?" Cliff asked.

"No, he left there before she came. Vicente used to go to the school in New Dixie, but he was always in trouble. The other boys made fun of him because he was quiet and kind of different, and even in those days he was so strong he beat up some of them pretty bad. So he never got along in New Dixie, and soon he took to herdin' cattle. He was one of the first to line up behind the new Blackland leader, and now he's just about the right-hand man. If the vaqueros do anything rough to Vicente, they'll hear from the Blackland chief, and I don't want to be around when it happens."

Slowly the afternoon passed, while with each hour Cliff's hopes for Madison's arrival weakened, and by dark there was still no sign. It looked as if even the delay Janet had provided was unavailing.

It was a subdued and silent group that sat down to supper. Wade, coming back from feeding his animals, reported that the vaqueros had tied Vicente hand and foot and bolted him inside one of the steel cages.

Janet nodded. "Lilli and I went down to bandage his shoulder," she said. "The guard wouldn't let us near him."

By the time the meal was over, the stars had disappeared behind slow-moving clouds, and as Cliff walked with Janet to the shack where she was to spend the night, a few drops of rain were falling. When they reached the door, she burst out: "Why hasn't Madison got here? What's happened to him?" Her voice was near breaking, and Cliff answered, "He may still show up."

"You don't really believe that, do you?"

"Not really," he confessed. "We're just not getting the breaks."

A rumble of thunder rolled toward them from across the river.

"Strange," he heard her say. "Tomorrow I'll be flying back to the States. I wonder if we'll ever meet again."

"Not likely. This is a pretty big world."

"I know. But I hope some day, maybe years from now, we do meet, and I'll be able to tell you why I came here."

"Can't you tell me now?"

"No."

Silence again; then she said, "You'll be glad to see the last of me, won't you? And if Madison had arrived, you would have liked me still less." She had moved closer; he could just make out the dim triangle of her face. "Did Claribel talk about Madison and me?" she asked with sudden intensity.

"A little."

"I suppose she said he was my lover."

Impatiently he asked, "What does it matter? The only thing Claribel said of any importance was 'Get out!'"

She turned away, and he heard her foot on the step before her shack; then: "Will you light the lamp for me?"

He struck a match and opened the door. "Afraid?" he asked.

"I just don't like the dark."

The yellow flame of the lamp sent the shadows back into the far corners.

She stood watching him, just inside the door, and she half smiled. "It must be wonderful never to be frightened."

"I wouldn't know," he answered. "I've been frightened many times."

Something like gratitude was in her eyes. "It helps to have you say that."

Crossing the clearing, Cliff entered the little shack opposite Janet's and lit the lamp. Outside, with night's coming, the jungle orchestration had begun—the high shrilling of tree frogs, the ceaseless hum of innumerable insects against the screen door. The room itself was damp and oppressive, and as he drew off his shirt he heard again the nearing rumble of thunder.

Too hot to sleep. Either that, or he was developing nerves. But at last he must have slept, for suddenly he found himself sitting bolt upright, listening, every sense alert; absolute hush held the jungle. Only the blood pounding in his ears. Then, while he listened, the trees began moving restlessly, and in the next second a crash of lightning flamed blue-white across the sky. The storm had broken, and pools of rain, driven by a lashing wind, poured in across the floor.

Switching on his flashlight, Cliff reached for a cigarette. Five o'clock—not long until sunrise. And then, swiftly as it had come, the storm passed. The clouds began thinning, and to the east Cliff saw the promise of dawn.

DAWN OF HIS LAST DAY! He kneeled to open his suitcase, then suddenly straightened—footsteps were running toward him down the path.

His first thought was that the Blacklanders had come for Vicente, and turning off the flashlight, he flattened himself beside the door. But the footsteps had stopped. Outside the shack a man was stamping water from his boots; a second later the door opened, and through the half darkness sounded the scratch of a match. It sputtered futilely, then went out, and with an exclamation of disgust a dim figure started across the floor. In that moment Cliff flashed on his light.

Thrown into sharp relief against the blackness stood a man of Cliff's own age, short in stature, and of slender but wiry build. The face was sensitive, intelligent, with high-arched nose, and a full, self-indulgent mouth. The hair was deep chestnut and inclined to curl; the riding boots, white shirt and small knotted bow tie were dripping with rain.

But now he whirled angrily. "Turn that light out of my eyes!" he ordered. "Who the devil are you?"

"I'm Cliff Bogard." Cliff lighted the lamp. "Sorry I blinded you."

The man looked at Cliff with open interest. "I've heard about you. You don't happen to be one of my esteemed aunt's favorites." Reaching in his pocket, he frowned. "Tobacco's soaked, like the rest of me. Do you have a cigarette? By the way, I'm Madison Florian, nephew of the lady you so aptly called a 'domineering pachyderm.'" He laughed, and for the first time Cliff noticed his eyes. They were a neutral color bordering on slate gray, but Cliff saw with a kind of shocked surprise that even while Florian seemed to be laughing, his eyes remained watchful and perfectly expressionless.

Mechanically Cliff handed him the pack of cigarettes.

"American tobacco!" Madison reached out eagerly. "Haven't seen an American cigarette for months." Deeply he inhaled, then perched on the table.

Abruptly Madison asked: "Where's Janet?"

CLIFF pointed to the shack across the clearing, and Madison's face lighted.

"Lord, but I'll be glad to see her!" He sneezed, and felt his wet shirt. "I'll get a whale of a cold from this wetting. I wonder—" He began rummaging about the shelves. "Wade used to hide his liquor somewhere around here," he muttered—then triumphantly lifted a bottle from behind a worn dictionary. "This will help." He pulled the cork with his teeth. "Join me?"

Cliff shook his head, and Madison took a liberal drink, then gave a grimace of displeasure. "That old buzzard must put alligator oil in the stuff." He perched on the table again. "Now, before I see Janet, bring me up to date on what's happening. Early tonight I got a message from her to come down here. That was the first I knew she was in the country. Claribel never let out a peep about her—I think that's why she sent me off to the upper range. What's the plot?"

"The plot is that Janet is being thrown out. So am I."

"I knew you were thrown out two weeks ago. But what has Janet to do with you?"

Briefly Cliff told the story, and when he came to their final clash with Claribel, Madison laughed. "The old lady is jittery about starting trouble with the Blacklanders."

"You're all rather jittery," Cliff said softly. "It's hard to believe an American colony hasn't the guts to handle its own property."

Madison flushed. "The thing isn't quite so simple. These Blacklanders look on all the country around the rubber plantations as their own. Claribel knows that if we let you in, it's bound to bring a show-down with them—a finish fight."

"Wouldn't it be worth a fight?" Cliff's voice was quietly insistent. "You'd bring boom times to New Dixie, and earn the everlasting gratitude of the United States Government. I'm ready to furnish the equipment and build the camps. I'll need a lot of rubber-gatherers, and that will mean steady wages for a good many families. Suppose we do collide with the Blacklanders—I have a hundred men down on the coast, and they're all two-fisted fighters."

Cliff stopped—he saw Madison's eyes grow thoughtful.

"Do you really believe those men of yours would fight?" Madison asked.

"They do when anyone tries to push them around."

For a moment Madison sat in silence; once he picked up the bottle, then changing his mind, put it back on the shelf and swung down from the table. "You've given me an idea, Bogard. We may be able to make a deal. But I'll have to talk with Janet first." He looked

at his watch. "I suppose she'll give me holy hell for waking her so early, but it's been so damn' long— See you later." He hurried out the door.

With speculative eyes Cliff followed the diminutive figure across the clearing. Then, realizing he was hungry, he went out to the cook-shack.

He had just finished a second cup of hot, bitter coffee when a din of angry voices brought him to the door, and he saw Madison and Janet hurrying down the path, with Sloan and a dozen men crowding about them. Madison halted and faced Sloan in open fury.

"How could he get away?" he shouted. "Where did you keep him, you blundering fool?"

Sullenly Sloan answered: "In Wade's steel cage. Tied hand and foot. I'm tellin' you somebody helped him."

"Show me where you had him," Madison ordered, then catching sight of Cliff, he called: "This won't make things any easier for you—that damned Vicente's loose."

Falling in behind the crowd, Cliff followed them down to Wade's menagerie. At the cage the story of Vicente's flight was plain. The door stood open; the heavy bolt, which could only have been moved from the outside, had been shoved back; and entering the cage, Madison picked up two heavy coils of rope—both cut cleanly with a knife. In cold anger he held the rope out to Sloan.

"Were you supposed to be guarding him?"

"I was. I tied him up myself and bolted the cage."

Madison's eyes were getting unpleasant to look at. "You were guarding him, and you didn't see anyone unbolt the door and cut these ropes. Why, they must have damned near stepped on you!"

Sloan's heavy face darkened. "When the storm broke, I got under a tree. It's that brat of Wade's done it. She's Vicente's—"

"You're too dumb to know who did it." Madison's contempt lashed like a whip. "You're not fit to guard a dead steer." He began cursing under his breath, while Cliff's eyes searched the wet earth. Shielded from the rain's violence by the thick canopy of leaves, Vicente's huge footprints lay deep and plain. Then—Cliff leaned forward—close beside the trail was the clear imprint of a woman's heel. Quickly he looked up. Just beyond the cage Janet stood watching him, and in her neck he saw an artery throbbing. For a second their eyes held; he read in hers the message of appeal, and with a single step he obliterated the telltale sign.

As if from a distance he heard Madison's voice, still thick with anger: "Won't Claribel be pleased when she learns about this! It'll be months before she lets us hear the end of it, and by God, we deserve it! Well, let's make a circle of the camp. There's about one chance in a hundred we can follow his trail."

IN SMOLDERING ANGER Cliff walked back to the clearing. He knew Janet was just behind him, but he didn't want to see her. She had a positive genius for doing the wrong thing.

He walked down to the plane, but Pablo was nowhere around, and after a few moments Cliff started back to the cook-shack to finish his breakfast. As he picked his way along the muddy path, he met Madison, returning wet and mud-covered from the jungle.

"Any sign of Vicente?" Cliff asked.

"How could there be? The water's six inches deep in all the trails. Let's get something to eat." Disgustedly Madison kicked the black muck from his boots. "That damned bungling Sloan! The bigger the man, the smaller the brain."

Inside the cook-shack Florian dumped two spoonfuls of sugar into his coffee, hesitated, and added a third. "Well, worrying about Vicente won't bring him back," he said, "so let's forget it. I want to talk to you about this rubber business. Have you another of those good American cigarettes?"

"Take the pack."

"Oh, thanks." Madison began sipping his coffee. "Before that fool Sloan let Vicente escape, Janet told me all about what you want to do. I've been thinking it over, and I might get Claribel to agree to your rubber option, on one condition—that you tell Claribel it's absolutely necessary for Janet to stay here and work for you."

Cliff's face had become emotionless as a mask. "What does she know about rubber?" he asked.

"Janet knows anything she wants to know. But that's not important. The important thing is that it's the only way I'll help you, and you're intelligent enough to see I hold the whip hand."

CLIFF LIGHTED A CIGARETTE and carefully blew out the match. Much as he hated having this ultimatum forced down his throat, he was realist enough to know when all the cards were against him, and this time he was playing against a winning combination—Madison and Janet.

"You win," he said, and his drawl had become almost gentle.

Madison's mobile face showed his delight. "That's fine! I'll go tell her."

"Just a minute. If I hire Miss Norman, she's got to work. I don't need ornaments in my organization—not even red-headed ones."

"That's up to Janet and you. All I care about is to have her stay." Madison thrust out his hand. "Is it a deal?"

"It is if you can persuade your aunt to let me get started."

"I'll persuade her, if it's the last thing I do. That damned old tyrant can't always—" He stopped, but not before Cliff saw those strange slate-colored eyes strike fire.

At the door Madison turned. "I'm flying down to the coast with Pablo this morning. I'll be back tomorrow, and meanwhile you and Janet better stay here. Above all, don't show up in New Dixie until I see you again. Then we'll have a council of war with—what is it you call my revered aunt?—with the domineering pachyderm."

Cliff walked slowly back over the wet trail to his shack. He was both elated and angry. Elated at the prospect of his eleventh-hour reprieve, angry at the condition that Madison—really Janet, for that matter—was forcing him to accept. But beyond all that, he was puzzled by Madison's sudden willingness to let him undertake the rubber work. It wasn't just because Madison wanted to have Janet stay; there was something more to it.

A discreet knock sounded on the door, and Wade entered.

"Just heard you and Miss Janet are stayin' on in spite of Claribel." The hunter looked genuinely pleased. "Claribel can be an old hellion, and there's a good many of us here think a lot of Janet Norman."

Cliff did not answer. As far as he was concerned, both women could be a thousand miles away.

Wade went on: "Just wanted to tell you to make yourself at home until Madison gets back. Lilli and I are leavin' for the upper country. There's a pair of jaguars near the rubber plantations I ought to get a good price for."

Cliff looked up eagerly. "Going to the plantations?"

"Right to the edge of 'em."

"Will you take me?"

Wade scratched his head. "We mayn't get back for five or six days, and Madison said you was to see him tomorrow when he flies up from the coast."

"I think I can fix that if you'll take me."

Wade still looked doubtful.

"What about Miss Janet?"

"Let her stay here." There was a spontaneous heartiness in Cliff's voice that made the hunter look up at him.

"I wouldn't like that," he said slowly. "Not leave her all by herself."

"She's not a child, is she?"

"You see," Wade began uncertainly, "I wouldn't want anything to happen."

Remembering Janet's heel-mark down by Vicente's cage, and her adroitness in forcing him to give her a job, Cliff asked bitterly, "What could happen? She might spank hell out of Plato, or tie your bushmasters in knots, but nothing could happen to her—that girl can take care of herself."

Looking more and more unhappy, Wade stood fumbling with his handkerchief, while Cliff added more quietly: "Well, if you're afraid to leave her, why not take her with us?"

"She don't know much about the jungle—she aint like Lilli."

Cliff blew up again. "What's the matter with her? You act as if she needs a nurse."

Wade gave his glistening forehead a polish. "It's this way, Mr. Bogard: Miss Janet's always been what you'd call sheltered. Her father watched over her—she never went out into the jungle except with him, and then only close in to New Dixie. Maybe he was too careful of her. It aint that she lacks courage, but she aint got experience of jungle ways, and courage without experience gets you into trouble." The hunter looked up. "I think you're bein' kind of hard on her. Dr. Norman just about filled her life; and when he got drowned in the flood, she was left all by herself. It aint been easy. Now if you don't take to women—"

"I take to women fine!" Cliff assured him. He was getting tired of being called a woman-hater. "The thing is I came here to do a job, and I don't want to be cluttered up, whether it's by women or children. So let's take her along—Lilli can help watch out for her, can't she?"

Wade folded his handkerchief and stuffed it in his pocket. "I guess," he said with no visible enthusiasm.

STIRRED BY PROSPECT of action, Cliff hurried down to the wharf—things were beginning to march. He found Pablo busy inside the cabin of his plane, and at the news that Cliff and Janet were staying at Carroll's, the little pilot raised eloquent shoulders.

"*Mi madre,*" he sighed, "never do I have passengers who so cannot mak' up the mind!"

"Our minds are being made up for us, Pablo, old son. But look here." Cliff pulled a map from his jacket. "I want to leave for the rubber plantation with Wade this morning, if you can pick me up tomorrow after you bring Madison back. Do you know any place you could land around there?"

Pablo bent over the map. "*Si.* I know three places. Here"—he pointed to a straight stretch of river—"is the best. I have landed twice before. But why do you go?"

"I want to see what shape those plantations are in. Will you pick me up—and not charge me any fancy rates, you old brigand?"

"I charge you plenty." Pablo laughed. "*Bueno.* Tomorrow I fly over at noon. Lay out something white for the signal, and I come down."

"It's a date. I'll—"

Glancing out through the open porthole, Cliff saw Janet and Madison coming down the catwalk. Even with his high-heeled boots, Madison's shoulders were an inch or two below the girl's, and he was taking long strides to keep step with her. Just outside the porthole they stopped, and Cliff heard Madison say: "Don't worry. We'll take care of him. Let's talk about us." Laughing, he drew the girl toward him, but with a little shake of the head Janet moved back, and Madison flushed.

"Have I changed as much as that?" he asked.

"You've hardened."

"The years harden most of us." His voice was still resentful. "If this Bogard person—"

"Oh, must we go through that again?" she burst out. "I've told you everything about him."

"Not everything, my pet. I doubt if you ever did tell me everything. But I know the Bogard type—good-natured, a little dumb—"

She shook her head. "He's anything but good-natured, and he's certainly not dumb."

"He practically said he doesn't want you around, and that's dumb and blind both."

Behind him Cliff heard Pablo's delighted chuckle, and shutting the porthole, he pulled the pilot close. "That gentleman," Cliff whispered, "better not know about my trip to the plantations."

With one finger the pilot touched his stubby mustache. "I am shut up like a sphinx."

CHAPTER NINE

A FEW moments later Janet and Cliff stood on the end of the dock, watching the plane taxi to midstream. It swung slowly into the wind, floated motionless for a second, then gathered speed as the engine roared, and the pontoons rose heavily from the river to disappear over the jungle trees. Madison had left for the coast.

Janet gave a little laugh of sheer relief. "It's gone." She took a deep breath; her eyes were shining. "It's gone, and we're still here. Don't you think I'm some use after all?" She was gayer than Cliff had yet seen her, happy in the knowledge that she had won a reprieve for both of them. But Cliff found the price galling to pay, and remembering that price, he said shortly: "Did Madison break the glad news that I have accepted the conditions you put him up to?"

Apparently unresentful, she answered: "He told me you said I could stay here and work for you. I know you don't like that. I know you don't want me here."

"I don't believe it makes any particular difference to you whether I want you or not. I've agreed that you're to stay. But you might as well know that it looks to me as if you're taking everyone for a ride to suit your own personal goal. You persuaded the Rubber Division in Washington to send you down to help me, although you didn't give a damn whether you really helped me or not. Now you've persuaded Madison you're to be wished onto me. I don't want you, but I've got to take you. You've used the Rubber Division; you've used Madison; and now you're using me. But there's this about it: If you're on my payroll, and supposed to be working for me, you'll work."

He stopped. He had never seen her eyes so bright, and for an appalled instant he expected her to weep, but instead she stood quite motionless; then she drew a long, deep breath, and to his amazement, she smiled. "I'll do anything you say," she murmured.

He looked at her suspiciously—she was much too meek; and he hurried on: "You're here because of a cold-blooded business proposition between Madison and me. I don't like it, but I had to take it because that was the way you wanted it. So don't expect favors. I'm here for rubber, and you're here for something else. Maybe it's Madison—I wouldn't know."

Again that ghost of a smile came and went. "So you think I'm pursuing Madison?"

"How should I know? I know less about you every hour. But there's just one thing we both better keep straight—the minute you interfere with my work, you and I are going to tangle. And if I have to, I can get tough."

She glanced at the square line of his jaw. "I believe you can." She nodded soberly; then: "When do I start work?"

"Right now. We're going with Wade and Lilli to the rubber plantations. Can you bring along your sketch box and make a rough map of them for me?"

"I'll try."

"Then we start as soon as Wade's ready."

They started within an hour, all four of them in the long canoe, Cliff paddling at the bow, Wade at the stern, the two girls seated between. For over a mile Wade kept to the main stream, then turned up a narrow tributary, its mouth almost hidden by lianas. Behind them it was like a thick green curtain dropping, shutting them off within a world of hushed and dappled sunlight, tree-covered and vine-woven. Far away they could hear herons crying, and to their nostrils the breath of the jungle rose hot and moisture-soaked. Turtles slid lazily into the water as they passed; and at every bend, slow-moving alligators watched them, undisturbed.

FOR THREE HOURS they had been passing neglected weed-choked banana plantations and small palm-thatched farmhouses, long abandoned and sinking into decay.

"Did the Blacklanders drive these people out?" Cliff asked.

Wade shook his head. "Just the opposite. The people who owned these farms were Blacklanders themselves. Madison's vaqueros made things so hot for 'em they moved away."

"Why?"

"It's like I told you. The vaqueros want all these river farms to raise feed for the cattle and fatten 'em before market time. They claim when the Blacklanders broke off from New Dixie they forfeited their rights to any land, and they're just squatters. So they shove 'em out."

"Does Claribel approve of such strong-arm methods?"

"Claribel don't know a whole lot about what goes on. Couple o' years ago her eyes begun botherin' her when she went out in the sun. Gave her headaches. So she stays in her house and don't see many people—leaves everything to Madison. He's about the only man she ever did trust, except"—Wade nodded toward Janet—"except her dad. Claribel always set great store by Dr. Norman. Anyhow, Madison and his vaqueros do pretty much as they like. But I think they're plenty worried over this new leader. He's got 'em kind of jittery."

"What about?"

Wade chuckled. "About who's gonna be boss—the vaqueros or the Blacklanders. The Blacklander chief aint standin' for no foolin'. Only two weeks ago Sloan's brother disappeared. Horse came back all covered with lather—but no rider. Sloan went wild."

Cliff wondered if part of the strength of this mysterious leader might not lie in the very fact that he dealt out a vengeance as unseen and unguessed as his own identity.

"A Robin Hood of the jungle," he said thoughtfully. "Whoever he is, he's a man of imagination."

"I don't guess I understand," Wade said.

"I mean to make a man dissolve into thin air seems more terrifying than killing him. But there's one thing I don't get: I haven't seen a single man in this country carrying a gun except you."

"Guns aint easy to come by up here," Wade answered. "Ever since the last revolution, the Government cracked down on firearms. It means twenty years in the prison colony to be found with one. But you notice all the men have bush-knives."

Then, lifting his paddle, Wade pointed to a small stream. "This marks the boundary of the Blacklands. You're in Vicente's stamping-grounds now." He brought the bow of the canoe up on the bank and stepped out. "I'll just take a look around for cat tracks. Back in a half-hour."

The heat of late afternoon hung over the jungle; and tired with the long paddle, Cliff stretched out on the warm sand, while Janet curled up in the shade. Lilli, still seated in the canoe, watched Cliff for a time, then thrust both her arms down into the water.

"There's a deep hole around that bend," she observed to no one in particular, "and never any alligators. Guess I'll go for a swim."

The prospect of a swim brought instant response from Janet. "I'd love to go, if I had a suit."

"Suit to swim in?" Lilli looked at her uncertainly, and Janet reddened at Cliff's chuckle.

She stood up. "May I go with you, Lilli?" Her voice was just the least defiant.

There was an eloquent pause before Lilli answered: "You may if you want."

Not an enthusiastic invitation, and as Janet followed Lilli upstream, she realized how much the girl resented her. With new eyes Janet looked at the slender, brown-skinned girl. She was fashioned for love; she was standing at its very portals, and Janet felt a surge of sympathy sweep over her, without quite knowing why.

The swimming-hole was a clear shady pool sheltered by a crescent-shaped beach of river sand.

"It's way over your head," Lilli warned; then in the same breath she asked: "Have you known him long?"

For a second Janet did not understand. "Oh, Mr. Bogard? No, not long. Two days."

Lilli began tracing little circles in the sand. "He's awful nice, isn't he?"

Instead of answering, Janet asked: "Have you ever been in love, Lilli?"

The girl seemed to consider. "I guess not," she said at last. "Vicente used to—" She broke off, then swiftly she looked up. "Are *you* in love with him?"

"Cliff Bogard? Heavens, no. He doesn't even like me."

"Don't you like *him?*" The question came with involuntary vehemence.

"I don't know whether I do or not. We didn't get off to a very good start—" Janet hesitated. "He has a nice smile. I think he's more at home among men than women. With women he's always on guard—at least he is with me." She stopped. She must have been thinking more about Cliff Bogard than she knew, and a little disconcerted at the knowledge, she drew off her white blouse and laid it on the bank. "Do you remember my father, Lilli?" she asked.

"Dr. Norman? Yes. He used to come over when anybody was sick. He came to see Vin once when he had a fever so bad they thought he'd die."

"You knew Vicente well?"

"We played together all the time. Then when he had trouble with the vaqueros, he went to live in the Blacklands."

"Do you see him often?"

"I used to. Not any more—not since he took up fighting the vaqueros." Resentment was manifest in Lilli's voice, and moodily she added: "If anything happens to Vicente, it'll be all the fault of his leader. Sometimes I wish the vaqueros would find him, whoever he is. I said that to Vicente once and he got mad. He says their leader is the last hope of the Blacklanders."

"LILLI"—JANET LEANED FORWARD—"suppose you wanted to find Vicente—wanted to find him very badly—what would you do?"

"I'd ride up the trail to the Blacklands and ask the chicle-gatherers and the banana-planters if they knew where he was."

"But hasn't he any place to live?"

"It isn't safe for him to stay in one place. He keeps moving around. It might take a long time to find him." She glanced up at Janet. "What do you want to find him for?"

"I was just wondering about him," Janet answered.

Lilli lifted her arms and began unfastening the back of her dress. The single garment dropped in a little circle about her feet, and for a second she stood on the stream's edge, naked, sun-bronzed, and lovely.

"Let's swim," she said.

WADE AND CLIFF were waiting by the canoe when the girls returned, and for two hours more they paddled steadily up the narrowing stream. Lilli had relieved Cliff at the bow, and he sat watching her effortlessly wield the paddle, shoulders and body moving in easy rhythm. Wade too had been watching his ward; and once, as she raised her head, he asked: "What is it, Lilli?"

"Somebody is following us along that bank."

Cliff turned. "I haven't seen anything—and I've been watching that bank."

"It's there, just the same."

For a time they paddled in silence; then Lilli whispered: "It's still there."

"Who could it be?" Cliff asked Wade.

"Might be a *chiclero* wants to beg some bacon or flour; might be an Indian just keepin' tabs on us. Jungle people are curious." Wade seemed wholly unconcerned. "Nothin' to worry about, anyhow. I got no enemies—never had—and the Indians are all gentle."

Lilli shook her head. "It wasn't an Indian."

"Who was it?" Cliff asked.

"I don't know."

For the next quarter-hour Cliff scanned every foot of the stream-bank for some movement, some sign of life, but saw nothing.

"Why not go ashore and see what it's all about?" he said once.

Wade shook his head. "By the time we get there, whoever it is would be gone. Besides, we'll be landin' to make camp soon."

Cliff found scant comfort in that. The shadows were growing longer, and at the next bend Wade turned the canoe toward the bank, then stepped out on a flat limestone rock. He listened for a full moment, his eyes questioning Lilli's, but she shook her head, and he picked up a machete.

"I'll go ahead and brush out. This trail aint been used for months." He moved forward, hacking at the tangle of undergrowth and lianas, while Lilli followed him, her arms laden with camp utensils and ponchos.

Cliff steadied the canoe for Janet, then shouldered what remained of the camp equipment.

"What should I do?" Janet asked.

"Follow Wade; and keep close—I don't like this set-up."

The camp-site itself was ideal, several hundred yards back from the stream, on the edge of a clearing, with a deep, cold spring, and a leanto built for shelter against storms. Around them great tree-trunks rose straight and full and free of limbs, festooned with long roots of air plants that hung down like Spanish moss.

Dropping his knapsack, Wade soon had a fire crackling, and to all of them the smell of wood-smoke seemed somehow friendly and comforting. But they found themselves speaking almost in whispers.

Slowly dusk enfolded them. The little clearing grew dim and unreal, bathed in a greenish light so strangely liquid that Janet murmured: "It's like living on the bottom of the sea."

Cliff nodded. "It'll soon be black as pitch. Better keep close to camp."

Inside the leanto, he began helping Wade build a bed of palm leaves for the girls, carpeting the ground with a thick, heavy mat, to lay their ponchos on. As he came back carrying the last armful of leaves, he looked about the clearing—Janet was nowhere in sight.

"Where's Miss Norman?" he asked Lilli.

Without looking up from the fire, she answered: "I guess she went back to the canoe."

"I just finished telling her to stay close to camp." He threw down the leaves, and coming out of the leanto, peered down the darkening trail. Already the jungle was losing form; the tree-trunks were receding into velvety purple, sky and branches merging before the swift coming of tropical night. But no sign of Janet.

Wrathfully he cursed himself for bringing her, and hurried back toward the stream. On both sides of the trail the freshly cut stubs of bamboos and lianas stood out white against the gloom, making the way easy to follow; but at the first turn he stopped—some indefinable warning, too faint to distinguish, too certain to disregard. He looked about him, every nerve tingling. Nothing—only the trees, dim and ghostlike, stretching back into the dusk—and the quickened beat of his heart.

Once more he moved along the trail. He was almost at the river-bank; and this time, unmistakably, he heard a sound. It might be Janet, or—

It was a man's voice! Inch by inch Cliff crept forward, and with both hands parted the fringe of bamboo. Down by the canoe he saw three shadowy figures. For a time they stood strangely quiet; then one of them climbed the bank, passing so close Cliff could have touched him.

The sound of the man's footfall died away, and Cliff took a step forward, then stopped. Just to his left the bamboo was rustling. He crouched down on hands and knees. Another sound—this time to the right. No doubt now. They were all about him; there was stealthy motion from every side. It was he himself who was being hunted. Slowly, with a kind of leisurely certainty, unseen forms were closing in on him.

Noiseless as a shadow, Cliff slipped from his narrow hiding-place. A tree loomed in his path, and with outstretched hands he groped his way around it. Another step. The night had grown death-still again, but with the menacing stillness of a trap ready to spring. If he could just—

A low laugh made him whirl. The giant figure of Vicente towered before him in the trail.

CHAPTER TEN

MOTIONLESS on the darkening bank of the river, Cliff watched the big Blacklander come nearer, while the rustling undergrowth told of an invisible cordon closing about him. Vicente stopped directly in front of Cliff, and from his great height scowled down. "Your memory is too short," the deep voice rumbled. "It was only yesterday I told you not to come here."

"I go where my work takes me," Cliff answered.

"Not any more. Now you go where *I* take you."

He gave an order; a dozen Blacklanders stepped from out the darkness, and seizing Cliff, hurried him back along the trail. A mile upstream they came to their horses, and Cliff was told to mount a rawboned mare; his hands were tied to the saddle-horn; and hedged in by captors, he started through the night.

For over an hour they kept a steady pace, always away from the river; and once as they crossed a stretch of open grassland, Cliff looked up at the stars. They were traveling north, straight toward the center of the Blacklands—and with that knowledge it was as if a cold wind touched him. He remembered Wade's tale of the vaqueros who had disappeared without a trace, just as he was disappearing now. Wade would know that something had happened, but he could do nothing. Help—whatever help Cliff could hope for—must come from within himself. Escape, no matter how slender the chance, must be his only hope.

But how? He shifted in the saddle and leaned forward to ease the pressure of the rope on his aching wrists.

Ahead of him and behind, the trail was crowded with riders—no chance of bolting, even if he could loosen his hands.

Yet there was one thing that brought Cliff a profound sense of relief—in all that band of riders, he could find no trace of Janet. They had evidently not seen fit to capture her, and he found comfort in the knowledge that he was free at least from that responsibility.

They splashed through another stream, then up a bank so steep the horses grunted, and out across an open stretch of bamboo grass. So for an hour they kept steadily on, until at last Cliff heard dogs barking, and saw flames flickering among the trees ahead—they had reached the Blacklanders' camp.

A strange, unreal scene: Three fires, tended by barefoot Indian women, cast flickering shadows across a little clearing where saddles, blankets and utensils were slung about in a disarray that bore evidence of a very temporary habitation. At the edge of the clearing clustered several palm-leaf shacks, their sagging roofs telling of long disuse.

Then from beneath his horse's shoulder Cliff heard a voice say: "This is as far as you go."

A heavy-set Blacklander with a stubble beard unfastened Cliff's wrists; and as he dismounted, the man pointed to the nearest shack. "Get in there, and don't come out until you're called."

It was jet black inside, but feeling about him, Cliff tested the strength of the walls. They were made of stout bamboo poles driven into the ground and laced together with lianas so securely they could not budge. Except for a coarse woolen blanket, the shack was empty—not even a palm-leaf mat. The place smelled wet and musty.

Cliff walked back to the door. Propped against a tree his captor sat, a bush knife lying in his lap. The women, meanwhile, had thrown wood on the fires until they were burning fiercely, lighting up the lean, tanned features of the Blackland riders. Most of the men were busying themselves with the horses; some were helping the women. There were no sentries, and except for his unshaven jailer, no one seemed to pay the slightest attention to Cliff. Only the unremitting watchfulness of that one man kept escape from seeming a fair possibility.

Foot by foot he began exploring the shortest and safest way to cross the clearing, considering the location of every tree, every bush. Not much cover even at night, but if he could make the fringe of jungle, the rest would be—

His eyes stopped. "Dear God!" he groaned. "There she is again!"

ACROSS THE CLEARING, the firelight glittering in her coppery hair, was Janet Norman. She had just dismounted; and even as Cliff caught sight of her, a Blacklander pointed in the direction of Bogard's shack.

Cliff felt a surge of baffled rage—with her on his hands, his hopes of escape went glimmering. She would be more of an obstacle than his bearded jailer.

He watched her walk toward him, threading her way among the Blacklanders; and as she came up to the guard, she stopped uncertainly, then seeing Cliff, ran forward. "I'm so glad you're here," she burst out.

"That's just fine." He gave a short laugh. "Personally, I can think of places I'd rather be."

"I mean," she amended, "I'm not so frightened, now you're here. I thought I was all alone."

The guard was listening, and Cliff dropped his voice. "Did Vicente bring you here?"

"No. I haven't seen Vicente. Three Blacklanders brought me."

"That accounts for it. I was wondering why Vicente would kidnap you after you helped him escape."

She shook her head. "I wish I had helped him—I'd be better off."

Cliff glanced at her with an incredulous smile. "You don't have to cover up with me, you know."

"But I didn't help him, I tell you! I intended to, but when I went down to the cage, he was already gone." She looked around. "What are they going to do with us?"

"I can think of a better question—what am *I* going to do?"

"You mean escape?"

"Why not? What have I to lose?"

She was silent, her eyes clouded with indecision; then she asked: "Why do you always say 'I'? Don't you want me to escape too?"

He did not trust himself to answer.

"I'd be in the way, wouldn't I?" she persisted.

"You probably would. But I wasn't thinking of that. I was thinking you would be foolish to take the chance. They won't do anything to you—I don't know why they brought you in the first place."

FOR A TIME SHE SEEMED lost in thought; then she asked, "Where's Vicente?"

Cliff nodded toward where the Blacklander stood in the shadows beyond the fire, and to Cliff's surprise Janet started across the clearing.

In her shorts and loose blouse she looked like a tall red-haired boy as she made her way among the horsemen, then stopped before Vicente with a kind of frightened determination. Cliff saw the big Blacklander pull off his sombrero, and towering above her, stand listening to whatever she was saying. Twice he shook his head, then began edging away from the fire, while Janet kept step with him, until they disappeared from Cliff's vision.

Ten minutes passed. Cliff had just gone inside to test the strength of the bamboo walls again, when a light footfall made him look up. Janet was back.

"Here's something to eat," she said. In each hand she carried a plate heaped high with meat and frijoles, and giving one to Cliff, sat down in the doorway.

Hungrier than he realized, he joined her, half hoping she might explain her talk with Vicente, but she finished in complete silence and laid down the plate.

She looked at him. "May I change my mind?" she asked.

"What about?"

"If you're going to try an escape, I want to come with you."

Obviously her talk with Vicente hadn't succeeded. "You're a little hard to keep track of," he said.

"But I may come?"

"It would be wiser if you stayed."

"I'd be afraid after you left. I'd much rather go with you. Please."

"It may be rough going. Do you think you can take it?"

"I can take it."

Cliff sighed. The guard was leaning comfortably back against his tree, rolling a cigarette, but his eyes never left them.

"That owl gets on my nerves. Let's go inside." Cliff helped Janet to her feet.

Safe from the eternal scrutiny of their jailer, he asked: "Do you suppose you could get me a knife?"

"I asked for one when they gave me the frijoles. They only let me have a spoon."

"I need something to cut with." He unscrewed the lens of his flashlight, but the casing was too thick and blunt. "Have you any metal about you?" he asked.

"*Metal?*"

"Not so loud. I mean, do you happen to be wearing any garter things?"

"You don't know much about women's clothes," she said. "With shorts and socks, you don't wear 'garter things.'" Then she touched the sketching-case that hung from her shoulder. "Would this do?"

He opened it and felt the metal edge—not very sharp, but it might serve. "Hold this blanket tight with both hands," he told her. "I'll try to cut it."

Sawing the tough, native wool with the edge of Janet's sketching-case was no easy task, and they worked for nearly an hour. Bending over her in the darkness he could hear her soft, quiet breathing, and even as he worked, Cliff found time to be grateful that she showed no sign of jitters.

Laboriously he cut three long strips from the blanket and laid them side by side near the door, then flexed his cramped, raw fingers. "Now," he whispered, "we'll have to wait until the camp quiets down."

Two hours dragged by. Once Cliff thought Janet had fallen asleep, but at his slight movement she lifted her head. "Ready?" she asked.

"I'll take a look." He crept to the door.

No movement out there now. In front of their shack someone had replenished the fire; the rest of the clearing was dark. The camp had turned in for the night—all but their lone guard. Apparently untiring, he sat facing them, the heavy knife in his lap, while for ten interminable minutes Cliff watched him. There was something maddening in that dull, everlasting vigilance.

At last Cliff placed his mouth close to Janet's ear. "I've got to make that fellow take his eyes off the door." He felt about over the hard mud floor, hoping to find a stone or clod of earth, but the floor was packed smooth and tight; and at last, picking up Janet's sketching-case, he looked at it doubtfully. "We'll try this," he whispered. "If it works, be ready with those strips."

On hands and knees he crawled to the entrance. Their jailer had not budged—he seemed immovable and utterly untiring. Coolly, methodically measuring the distance, Cliff drew back his hand, threw the sketching-case high in the air and heard it fall with a soft thud just behind the guard. The man whirled.

It was just that scant second Cliff needed. A leap, a single blow, and wrapping both arms about the unconscious form, he dragged it inside. Swiftly he bound the guard hand and foot, then used the extra strip to gag him. In the dim light, Cliff glanced across the prostrate body at Janet. She was kneeling, testing his knots.

He went back to the door—all quiet out there. "Ready?"

She nodded, and together they ran from the shack. Cliff picked up the guard's knife as he passed, and a second later they were in the jungle. Holding her by the hand, he led the way, groping through almost total darkness, thankful that the undergrowth was sparse beneath the trees; and not until they dropped down into a shallow valley did he dare snap on the flashlight.

EASIER GOING NOW. He slackened his pace, for Janet was stumbling in an effort to keep up, and her breath was coming in spasmodic gasps. "If she goes to pieces now," he told himself, "we're sunk." At the end of an hour they reached a small brook, and lifting Janet in his arms, he began wading to obliterate their trail.

"Vicente will be after us by dawn," he said once, while they rested. "He'll start first for the place where they caught us, so our best chance is to wade down this stream and head for the river."

"I can wade if you don't go too fast," she told him.

Together they splashed along the stream-bed, until at length they were in a little leafy glade, wet to the waist and nearly exhausted. There the battery of the flashlight expired, and disgustedly Cliff threw it into the stream. "That means we camp here," he said, and heard Janet sigh in relief.

"All in?" he asked.

"Dead." And curling up on the bank, she fell asleep.

Slowly the night passed. On the bank beside him Cliff could hear her quiet, steady breathing, like that of a worn-out child. Once, without waking, she stirred and gave a little cry, and he thought with foreboding of the coming day. She'd be stiff and doubly weary after a night on the ground. It might be better to take off her shoes and wet socks, but that would waken her. If only it had been Lilli instead of this girl of the cities!

Sometime before dawn a damp, chilling wind sprang up, and taking off his leather jacket, Cliff spread it over the girl, then with a start he felt her hand touch his. "Thanks," she said sleepily.

"You awake?"

"I'm cold." And once more her breathing told him she was asleep again.

To the east the sky began brightening; a flock of parakeets flew past; and rousing himself, Cliff bent over her. She lay with her head pillowed on one arm, legs curled up in an effort to keep warm, thick hair flowing about her shoulders like a scarf of red gold. Gently he shook her.

"Janet," he said aloud. It was the first time he had called her by that name.

Slowly the dark eyes opened, she looked sleepily up at him; then as consciousness returned, the eyes took on their old wariness, and she sat bolt upright. "Are the Blacklanders after us?" she whispered.

"They will be soon. There's a game trail up ahead, and I think it leads to the river. If we can get through by noon, we may pick up Pablo." He helped her to her feet. "I know you're dog-tired, but our only hope is to keep going."

With both hands she pushed back her hair. "I can make it," she said steadily.

THEY WERE FARTHER from the river than he thought; twice he stopped to let her rest, and he had begun to think they were hopelessly astray when he caught the welcome gleam of open water, and with an exclamation of surprise halted so suddenly that Janet gave a quick gasp of fear. He motioned across the river.

There, in place of the riotous opulence of jungle growth, the bank was lined with long, orderly rows of gray-barked trees, extending in straight, equidistant files. So even was the spacing between the trees that the tall, vertical columns formed a distinct checkerboard of light and shadow which stretched back until lost in the hazy distance of the hinterland. They had come out upon the famous New Dixie plantations!

Thrilled with a sight that had brought him so many miles, Cliff forgot in that moment of discovery he was a hunted fugitive. As far as he could see, up and down the river, rose the great forest giants, rank after rank of them—native rubber, *hevea,* the tree that had made possible the quickened tempo of all the modern world and had almost lost a war! The lofty trunks stood at the very peak of their superb prime, clean of limb, with thick, leathery leaves gleaming in the early sun. That smooth gray bark encased thousands of gallons of milk-white latex—the rich, waiting harvest of years of sunlight, rain, and fertile soil. The absence of undergrowth, the well-pruned boles, told Cliff the plantations had not lacked care, and his eyes were lighting with professional approval when a shout from upstream recalled him.

"Wait here," he warned, and crept to the edge of the bank.

A half-mile above them a dozen riders were fording the river; and on the farther bank another group sat their horses—the chase was on! Cliff looked at his watch: A little after ten. In two hours Pablo should be flying up to meet him; and if the map was accurate, they had nearly five miles to go before they could reach the stretch of water he had chosen for a landing. Five miles of jungle river-bank, and they were already worn from the night before. They might make it, but it would be dangerously close, and in the soft earth their footprints lay plain and easy to follow.

He hurried back to Janet. "Vicente's gang is working toward us along both sides of the river," he told her. "From now on, we better take to the water."

The footing near the bank was firm gravel, but roots and lianas made progress incredibly slow, and each time Cliff tried to quicken their pace, Janet fell more and more behind. Twice she stumbled, and the second time he had to go back and lift her to her feet. Every nerve in his body was clamoring to hurry, but he forced himself to say quietly: "Let's rest awhile."

Minutes passed; Janet's chest was still breathlessly rising and falling when Cliff pulled her behind the buttressed roots of a ceiba. There they crouched shoulder-deep in water while four horses passed along the trail, so close they heard the creak of saddle-leather. The lines in Cliff's face deepened—they were between two groups of pursuers now.

Those next two hours were a nightmare of dogged patience and heartbreaking endurance. Each glance at his watch told him they were falling behind, but he had not the heart to urge her to a quicker pace. Once more she stumbled, and in frantic desperation he picked her up and began carrying her.

"I can walk," she protested. "You're too tired to carry me."

"I'm all right," he said, and started forward.

She squirmed in his arms. "Let me—"

"Be quiet, will you!" He shook her as if she were a willful child, then, feeling her body relax, hurried on. His heart and muscles protested against this added task, but even under the burden of Janet's weight he was making better time, and a few minutes after noon he saw a long, straight stretch of water shimmering in the sun. With a prayer that it might be the landing-place Pablo had selected, he let Janet sink down on the sand, and stepped out upon a narrow spit of gravel to get a full view of the sky.

No sign of plane in all that cloudless blue expanse—Pablo might easily have come and gone. Dog-tired and almost void of hope, Cliff started back toward Janet, then froze to immobility—at the lower bend of the river three riders were wading upstream; and in that instant they caught sight of him. A far-off shout, an answering call from above, and Cliff saw their quirts rise as they wheeled their horses toward him—the hunt was closing in!

Desperately he turned to his last refuge—the green wall of jungle that lined the river-bank. No hope there—he would leave a trail so plain the horsemen could run him down within a mile. He stared at Janet's crumpled figure and faced the bitter truth—they were done.

NOW FOR THE FIRST TIME he heard a thin, high drone in the sky, and every nerve within him began singing, but in sudden panic he remembered Pablo's words: "Lay out something white." Unless Pablo knew they were waiting, he would not risk a landing. Cliff glanced down at his own tan shirt and khaki trousers—they blended almost perfectly with the river sand. Pablo would never see them.

Racing to Janet's side, he knelt down. "Your blouse—" He lifted her up. "Let me have your blouse."

Bewildered, yet sensing his need, she tried to rouse herself, but her fingers, trembling with exhaustion, fumbled futilely, and Cliff pushed her hands aside. Clumsily he unfastened the buttons and tried to slip the blouse from her shoulders, but it caught in the strap of her brassière. He gave a frantic tug; the strap broke, and clutching the blouse, he ran to the end of the sand-bar. Violently he waved the tiny white fragment back and forth, striving to make up by motion what his signal lacked in size.

The plane's droning had come closer. Face to the sky, eyes aching, Cliff stood longing for some sign, but the drone of the engine stayed unchanged, and already the plane was passing.

He cast an anxious glance upstream. Two more riders had joined the others and were lashing their horses through the shallows. Even if Pablo saw him, there would be little time to—

Cliff gave a shout of utter joy. The plane had turned. Motor idling, it began gliding lower and lower in a tight spiral, until Cliff heard the whistling of the wires. The Blacklanders heard it too—five abreast they were galloping toward him, their foam-flecked horses gaining speed as the water grew more shallow.

Still holding the blouse, Cliff ran back to Janet, gathered her in his arms, and half swimming, half wading, made his way out to midstream. The plane, like a great bird, had leveled, and skimming the water, settled slowly until the pontoons touched. In a wide arc it swerved shoreward, then came to a stop not five yards away.

Cliff lifted the girl up to Pablo and climbed after her.

"Get going!" he panted.

But Pablo had already grasped the danger. Opening the throttle wide, he headed the roaring plane straight for the riders. Cliff caught a glimpse of their terrified faces as the pontoons rose from the water and thundered a scant foot above the Blacklanders' heads. Louder than the engine, Cliff heard their savage shout—Pablo, with a grin of pure delight, was thumbing his nose.

Cliff looked down at Janet. Her eyes were closed, and he bent anxiously over her. "Everything all right?"

She summoned barely strength enough to nod. "Everything will be, when you give me back my clothes."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THAT night in Claribel's candlelit room at New Dixie the rubber contract was signed. Whatever difficulties Madison had met persuading his aunt to change her mind he kept to himself, but he took the precaution of advising Cliff against telling about their capture and escape from the Blacklanders. "What the old girl don't know won't bother her," he commented; and Cliff remembered Wade's observation that many affairs in New Dixie never reached the "old girl."

Cliff frowned as he read the contract, then looked up at Claribel. "If I sign this," he objected, "it puts me rather completely at your mercy."

"How does it?" she asked testily.

"Look at this clause—if any trouble develops out of my operations to threaten the peace and security of New Dixie, the contract is void. And here's another—all persons employed by me must be acceptable to you. Either one of those clauses leaves it wide open for you to stop my operations at any time."

Claribel re-read the contract. "Madison wanted it that way," she said uncertainly; then she glanced across the room, where her nephew was talking with Janet, and her voice sharpened. "Madison, if you can possibly tear yourself loose a moment, there's this little business of a contract. Mr. Bogard doesn't like the way it's worded."

"What's the matter with it?" Madison asked shortly.

"It's too one-sided," Cliff answered. "Any time you want to break the contract, you can do it."

"Sure we can. That's our protection in case trouble starts with the Blacklanders."

"Why should you worry? We're the ones they'll be after, not you. This contract puts me between two fires—you can slow me down or stop me at any time, and if you slow me down, the United States will cancel their agreement with me for non-delivery."

Madison's slate-gray eyes had grown unfriendly. "That's the way I wrote the thing, and that's the way it is." Turning on his heel, he walked back to Janet.

Cliff's face showed no sign of his inward anger—Madison had the upper hand, and they both knew it. Reach-

ing forward, Cliff picked up the pen and signed the contract. He handed the pen to Claribel, and she scrawled her name beneath his—she seemed even more thoroughly skeptical of the future than he.

"Sure as I'm sitting here," she announced, "I know there'll be trouble. And if there is, don't come to me. You and your so-called fighting Irish will have to take care of yourselves."

"We'll take care of ourselves."

"I'm not so sure of that, and neither is the Government. I just learned they're opening the old garrison near the river because of the raid Vicente made on your warehouse. I knew we'd get mixed up with soldiers before this was over." The matriarch's blue eyes kept peering across the room, where her nephew and Janet stood, and she gave an inelegant grunt. "I get slightly ill whenever I see a grown-up man act like a lapdog. Which reminds me that Madison says you insist on Janet Norman working for you. Is that right?"

"That's right."

She sniffed—louder this time. "You look intelligent, but I could always be wrong. Well, I warned you once before about Janet, so go ahead and hang yourself."

Again she cast a disgusted glance at her nephew. "Whenever that girl's around, he's positively jubilant."

Madison was even more jubilant that night when he rode out to tell the news of the contract to his head vaquero. The rubber deal was almost as important a victory for Madison as for Cliff, and in high good humor he straddled a chair in his foreman's cabin.

"It's a great break if we play our cards right, Sloan," he exulted. "Maybe we could have handled the Blacklanders by ourselves, and maybe we couldn't. Now it doesn't matter. They'll wear themselves down on Bogard's gang, and when the right time comes, we'll join Bogard and smash them once for all." Madison grinned. "It's our duty to protect the man we've signed a contract with, and neither Claribel nor the damned Government soldiers can say we started it."

Sloan nodded admiringly at his diminutive chief. "And after we've cleaned up Vicente's gang?"

"The Blacklands are our turkey. We might even take over the rubber business."

"We don't know how, do we?"

"We will, by then. All the construction work will be done, and the rubber gatherers will be trained. And don't forget Janet Norman. She's working for Bogard—she'll know a few things that'll come in handy." Madison pushed back the chair. "Meanwhile, here's a job for you. Soon as Bogard gets things moving in the plantations, I want you to bear down on every Blackland family. Stir up trouble, get tough. Spread it around you're there to help protect Bogard. It's just possible we can even smoke out the Blackland chief."

FOR CLIFF THE TWO WEEKS that followed were the busiest he had ever known. One hundred strong, his men arrived with tons of equipment from the coast and established headquarters at the site of the burned warehouse.

A permanent location for the headquarters camp was the first big problem for Cliff and his construction foreman, Casey. They finally decided to establish it at the very head of river navigation, where seagoing cargo ships could come to Bogard's dock for rubber. The New Dixie docks lay two miles below, and the rubber plantations ten miles up the river. Their only difficulty lay in the fact that just above their camp the river broke in a series of rock-studded rapids, extending for two miles upstream toward the plantations, and here Cliff was faced with a choice of transportation routes.

"The safest way to get the rubber down," Casey insisted, "is to build a road from camp around the rapids and up to the plantations. There's already a mule-trail you can start workin' on, and then you wouldn't have to worry about floods or gettin' the boats hung up on the rocks."

But Cliff shook his head. "I went over that trail yesterday," he told Casey. "It's so narrow you'd have to blast it out to make it wide enough for trucks, and that's expensive. Besides, we haven't money to buy all the trucks we'd need. I don't like the idea of shooting the rapids any more than you do, but I think we can blow the bigger rocks out of the channel, and build barges with reinforced bottoms to bring the rubber down. That way will be a lot cheaper."

"But not near so safe," Casey protested.

Cliff pointed to the ledger on his desk. "Take a look at my bank account and tell me where I'm going to get the money for all those trucks and all that road construction,—and I'll build you a boulevard.

And in the end Casey agreed.

SO CLIFF'S MEN BEGAN WORK on headquarters camp, clearing the land first with bulldozers, then enclosing it with a high barbed-wire fence; and soon the foundations of two warehouses were laid. A dozen other buildings sprang up—bunkhouses for the men, power-station, and a combined office and living-quarters for Cliff. On the river side of the fenced enclosure, Cliff drove piles for a modern dock to moor the barges that were to bring down the rubber, and for the cargo ships that last of all would load the rubber and take it on the long trip back to the States.

Cliff made the barges with special care, for they had to be stoutly built to withstand the rough journey down over the rapids when the time came to bring the rubber from the plantations to the dock. They were made of heavy native wood, the flat bottoms reinforced with sheet iron, and Casey viewed the first one finished with satisfaction. "Build 'em all like that," he told the men, "and the trip over the rapids will be a joy ride."

From dawn until dark the din of riveters and the whir of machinery broke the jungle silence, while back in the rubber plantations Cliff sent other groups to begin experimental tapping to test the quality of the crude latex and the productivity of the trees. Their reports confirmed Cliff's earlier judgment—the sticky white milk that flowed so freely beneath the tapper's knife was *hevea* rubber of the highest quality. Encouraged by these early indications, he sent crews to clear paths and set up little bamboo and palm-leaf shelters, preparatory to the actual collection and smoking of the sap.

There was still a world of preliminary work to be done. Trails were needed, and temporary camps; later a small army of rubber gatherers would have to be recruited from the settlements along the river—farmers and banana planters, Indians, peons, and 'breeds, men who could be trained to go into the plantations with knife and tin cup to tap the trees of sap and smoke it over smudge fires until it formed great brown *bolachas* ready for shipment to the States.

Cliff was under no illusion that recruiting these men would be an easy job, for on his trips up the river in search of dock-sites he soon found that the river people were deeply suspicious of him, and even actively hostile.

But recruiting rubber-gatherers was not his immediate problem. Neither, to Cliff's surprise, was Vicente. Three weeks had passed since his escape from the Blacklands, and so far no least sign of trouble had come from that quarter. Not one of his men had been molested. Cliff realized that the lull might only mean a respite while the Blacklanders gathered their forces for a raid even more destructive than they had made on the warehouse, but whatever the reason, Cliff welcomed the chance it was giving him to establish himself.

Certainly the presence of the Federal soldiers had nothing to do with Vicente's inactivity. The little motley

band of *Federalistas*, about fifty in number, arrived from the coast and settled themselves comfortably in the old garrison by the river. The fact that Claribel had offered a reward for the capture of the Blacklander chief spurred them to a brief activity, but when two weeks passed without a single sign or clue, they lost interest.

Chapter Twelve

CASEY, the construction foreman, was the first to bring news of a solitary horseman who repeatedly had been seen watching the camp from a high bluff across the river. "He was half hidden in a clump of bamboo," Casey reported, "but he sat there watching us for over a half hour; and when I walked down to get a good look at him, he pulled out. I'd swear he aint one of Madison's fancy vaqueros. I told the boys about it, and two of 'em said they'd spotted him before, always at dawn. Maybe your boy friend Vicente's keepin' tabs on us."

Bogard had no answer. It might, of course, mean that the Blacklanders wanted to size up the number of Cliff's men and watch their movements preliminary to a raid. Or it might only mean the idle curiosity of some river *ranchero*.

So Cliff dismissed it. He had other things to worry about: Janet Norman, for instance—though even minutes were precious, he had to build separate quarters for her, diverting material and labor from more urgent needs. Cliff knew that speculation was rife as to why the boss had brought this woman into camp, but he offered no explanation, and as the days passed the attitude of the men changed from strained politeness to a kind of cautious courtesy, then to frank friendliness.

That was due to Janet herself. She had a gift for friendship—toward everyone but Cliff, apparently—and before many weeks she was sewing on buttons, mending clothes, until every man in camp, from Casey to Wing Toy, the cook, regarded her with warm approval.

Cliff's determination that Janet should earn her own way and not be a "red-headed ornament" brought other unpredictable outcomes. At first he decided she could relieve him of much time-consuming paper work, and started painstakingly to train her to keep the office records. After a week he wondered if it was worth the effort; and the grim possibility occurred to him that for some unknown reason she simply refused to learn anything about the camp or the office.

Casey, now thoroughly subjugated, did his best to help her, even going so far as to shield her mistakes from Cliff. One morning, before sunrise, Cliff saw a light in his foreman's quarters; and walking over, found the big Irishman laboriously recopying a list of supply-cards Cliff had assigned to Janet the day before.

"What are you doing with those cards?" Cliff demanded.

Casey reddened. "Just thought I'd check 'em over."

"You've been working at this all night, haven't you? Don't you think you better let Miss Norman finish her own job?" Cliff persisted. "Or are you figuring on making this a one-man camp?"

Defiantly Casey looked up. "She tried to do the job, Boss, but you're just pilin' too much on her. If you ask me, you're kind of hard on the little girl."

Little girl! Cliff's blood-pressure took a sharp rise. "If you ask me," he growled, "you're getting soft-headed. The reason she doesn't do it is because she doesn't want to." He said no more. It was the first time in their eight years' association that he and his woods boss had come even this close to a quarrel, and he wondered if Claribel might not be right—Janet Norman was a good person to have around if you were hunting for discord.

But for Cliff the culminating drawback of Janet's presence was that it meant Madison's presence too. He was constantly dropping in at camp, and would stay for hours chatting with Janet, or take her up with him to New Dixie.

Once, just before dinner, while Cliff was sitting in the office, he heard Janet enter, and seeing that she had changed from slacks to dress, said testily: "So we're having a social evening tonight."

She flushed, but her tone was level. "Not if you have anything you want me to do."

"Just what can you do? I've been wondering."

She bit her lip. "I'm pretty good at drawing," she answered. "And I can letter—"

Cliff drew from the files a large map and opened it on the desk. "Ever see anything like this?" he asked.

She leaned over his arm. "It's a control map, isn't it?"

He blinked in surprise. "What do you know about control maps?"

"Father taught me. I used to make them for him on his irrigation work." There was just the touch of a barb in her voice as she added: "He couldn't draw much better than you."

Cliff laughed outright. "If you can do better—and I hope to God you can—you've got a job."

Before they went to supper that night, he had outlined his system of transferring to the map the intricate field notes his men were making back in the plantations.

"Think you catch on?" he asked doubtfully, remembering his past experience.

"I think so."

And she did. It was a hard, exacting task, and highly important, for mistakes could mean costly delays. All through supper he wondered if he were not committing another blunder in turning the work over to her, but he noticed that Janet spent the evening with Madison in the office and, head bent over the map, she was obviously paying little attention to her guest. An hour later Cliff smiled contentedly to see Claribel's nephew riding back up the trail—never before had he left so early.

For the next week Cliff made a point of checking up daily on Janet's work, but he could find no least error, and he marveled not only at her accuracy, but at the clear, precise lettering, in contrast to his own uneven and impatient scrawl. She might be a help after all!

AT LAST, TO CLIFF'S infinite relief, the final cargo of supplies and equipment arrived from the States. It was two weeks overdue, and the delay had already put Cliff dangerously behind on his delivery date, so he threw his entire crew into the task of unloading. Meals and sleep forgotten, they toiled beneath the great harsh glare of arc lights, while the job of transferring the cargo to the dock went unceasingly on, and by dawn of the second day everything had been unloaded except the flat-bottomed boats—small, shallow-draft vessels to be used later in bringing rubber down from the upper tributaries. As the last boat was being lowered to the dock, a defective cable snapped, the bow swung around, hurling the supply foreman against the wharf, and when the men released him, two ribs had been broken. Cliff carried him to the hospital shack, then sent a messenger for Pablo to fly the stricken man to the coast.

Morosely he went back to his own office to hold council with Casey. The big construction boss was working with Janet on the control map, and they both looked up as Cliff threw himself wearily into his chair.

"We've got to get us another supply foreman," Cliff said. "The question is, who?"

They named and discarded a half-dozen men, but none seemed to fit the job, and in the baffled silence that followed, Janet asked: "What about Wade Carroll?"

Cliff shook his head. "No, he wouldn't—" He sat for a moment in thought, then walked twice about the office.

ny not?" he said at last. "Maybe he's just the man." He turned to Janet. "I think you've got something. Better drop that map and come along with me. I'm not sure he'll be easy to persuade."

THEY FOUND THE HUNTER and his ward just back from a trip up river. Lilli showed frank delight in seeing Cliff again, and Wade himself was eager to consult with him and Janet about a school catalogue that had arrived from the States.

"Gettin' time to send Lilli somewhere," Wade explained, "and I'm still all up in the air about her education. She don't take the proper interest in it." Wade's eyes rested for a moment on Cliff's face. "But I don't guess it was about Lilli's schoolin' you-all came to see me."

"No, it wasn't," Cliff admitted. "My supply foreman cracked two ribs this morning, and Pablo is flying him down to the coast. Casey has his hands full with construction work, and I'm wondering if you'd take the job. You know this country better than any other man, and I want to make you a foreman. You could still run your line of traps, and you'd be a big help."

Wade shook his head. "I like you, Mr. Bogard," he said. "And I'd like workin' for you, but I can't afford takin' sides. You remember how the Blacklanders feel about you and the plantations. If trouble started, I'd be right in the middle of it."

"You wouldn't have anything to do with the plantations," Cliff replied. "Your job would be helping get supplies."

Again Wade shook his head. "I'd be known to be workin' for you, and it just aint safe."

"You mean there's likely to be trouble with the Blacklanders?"

Wade looked noncommittal. "Could be," he admitted.

Cliff rose—he had wasted his time.

But as he turned to go, Janet spoke. "Wade," she said, "if you came up to camp as supply foreman, Mr. Bogard and I could coach Lilli so she'd be better prepared for school. It would be almost as good as school itself."

The hunter's face changed, and Cliff heard Lilli's ecstatic: "Oh, I'd love that!"

Wade's eyes fixed his ward. "Seems to me you're takin' to learnin' kind of sudden."

Lilli ran toward him. "But I'd really study—honest, I would."

Wade pulled out the huge blue handkerchief—sure sign of mental turmoil—and mopped his bald head through a long minute; then accepting defeat, he sighed. "Well, I guess I'm your new foreman, Mr. Bogard."

So Wade left his menagerie in care of the two Indian boys, and moved himself and Lilli up to the rubber headquarters.

Casey regarded the addition dubiously. "Another woman in camp," he announced to no one in particular. "I better cable for me evenin' clothes."

But the addition of another woman wasn't all. Lilli begged to bring Plato, and Cliff half-heartedly protested. "All we need is a jaguar to turn this place into a first-class madhouse," he grumbled, but in the end he consented; and to the consternation of every dog in camp, Plato's cage was set up beside the Carrolls' shack. Lilli's eyes were happy again. Casey made one—and only one—attempt to win the affection of the pet jaguar. "Lilli says that cat's just playful," he confided to Cliff later, "but I never did find the seat of me trousers."

Janet tried faithfully to keep her promise about Lilli's education, but she soon saw that the girl had no real interest in studies. It was only when Cliff undertook the rôle of tutor that Lilli astonishingly awoke from her profound indifference to algebra and Latin verbs. Meanwhile she seemed content to play with her pet jaguar, help Wade on the trap-lines, and in the evening swim in the river below the docks.

After the swim, if there was work to be done—and usually there was—Janet would join Cliff in the office, spread out the big control maps, and transfer the field notes that the construction crews had brought in that day.

But one night soon after the arrival of the Carrolls, she was late in arriving. Cliff, a pile of papers before him, sat checking a column of figures, and twice looked over at Janet's empty chair; then at last, throwing down his pencil, he stood up. It was hot, humid and breathless outside—deadly hot within the little office; and even at eight o'clock there had come no break in the long, torrid heat of the day.

Driven by restlessness that made physical motion a necessity, he wandered about the room, eyes avoiding the unfinished work on his desk. He stopped before the door. The moonlight was so bright he could see the orchids in the trees above him, and with the thought that it might be cooler down by the river, he followed the path to the dock.

Halfway out along the wharf he saw a little heap of gleaming white, and walking toward it, leaned forward—it was Lilli's white cotton dress. For an instant he felt his heart quicken with alarm, and straightening, peered anxiously out over the unbroken surface of the river. Then, from just beneath his feet, and so close it startled him, a tranquil voice said: "Hello."

He knelt down. There in the dim obscurity of the wharf, both hands holding to a wooden pile, he discovered Lilli. Her face, almost lost in shadow, was smiling up at him, and once again she said: "Hello."

In sudden relief Cliff seated himself on the edge of the dock. "You gave me a fine scare, leaving your dress up here! Isn't it pretty late for you to be swimming?"

"It was so hot," she explained.

"Some night an alligator is going to take your toe home for a souvenir."

"Uncle Wade says that's all bunk about alligators." She tossed back her wet hair. "When are you going to teach me another algebra lesson?"

"Things are pretty hectic these days, Lilli."

"I'm getting 'way behind in my studying."

Smiling, he lighted a cigarette. "How that must annoy you!"

"But I never see you." The voice was clearly resentful.

"I'll tell you what," he said. "I've been thinking of taking you with me to some of the river villages. I'll need a lot more rubber-gatherers, and maybe you can tell me where to find them."

She gave a low cry of pleasure. "Oh, that would be grand. We could paddle up as far as the rapids, then—"

BUT CLIFF WASN'T LISTENING. Just beyond the edge of the wharf he saw a white arm and shoulder rise above the surface of the water, moving quietly and effortlessly toward them, leaving a ripple of silver that shimmered beneath the moonlight; and as the swimmer came nearer, Cliff recognized Janet's hair, streaming out behind her.

Close to the dock she stopped, and treading water, called: "Lilli!" Almost at once she caught sight of Cliff, and uttered a gasp of consternation, followed by a little embarrassed laugh. "This is no place for me," she said, and with a swirl and a flutter of feet, made for shore.

Cliff's eyes followed the long white line of her body, watching the strong, steady strokes of shoulder and arms, and the legs, beating in slow, perfect rhythm, until she had passed out of the moonlight into the darker shadows of the trees. Then, as if from a great distance, he heard Lilli say: "You're not listenin'."

He tried to reconstruct her sentence, and realized he had not heard a word. To cover up his inattention, he said: "You'll get water-soaked down there."

"Turn around, and I'll come up."

He turned. Behind him he heard a soft thud as she lifted herself from the river to the edge of the dock. The rustle of her dress followed.

"You'd better find yourself a towel," he suggested.

"Oh, I'll dry. I always do. There—you can turn around now."

Feet hanging over the water, she was wringing out her thick black hair, and smiling at him over her shoulder.

She was like some sleek river animal, drops of water glistening on her forehead and cheeks, the thin cotton dress clinging to her wet breasts and thighs. Suddenly she seemed to uncurl, and stretching out at full length on the dock, let her dripping hair hang over the edge. With half-closed eyes she looked up at the moon and gave a sigh of complete satisfaction.

"It's so nice and quiet and—just us."

He did not answer, and she went on: "I'd like it to be this way always. I hate things to change. When I think maybe I have to go away to school, I could die."

The voice trailed into a despondent silence, and Cliff laid his hand in sympathy on her hair.

"Maybe you won't have to go if you don't want to."

With an almost imperceptible motion she had laid her head in his lap. Her slant eyes dwelt on his, and raising her hand, she touched his hair.

"It's so thick," she half whispered. "Thick and heavy, like mine."

They were silent, each tremendously aware of the other. The glowing end of Cliff's cigarette grew dull; he could hear the faint ripple of current against the dock, while her hand, moving through his hair, seemed to be drawing his head down toward her. He bent closer. Her eyes were beckoning up to him, her full lips had parted, yet spoke no word. The night itself had grown very still, waiting, while long minutes passed; then Cliff's slow drawl broke the silence:

"I'm wondering how Señor Vicente would like this picture."

She frowned impatiently. "Oh, Vicente, he—" Her head jerked from his lap, she gave a low exclamation of anger, and Cliff saw Janet coming out along the dock.

Chapter Thirteen

"GIVING Lilli a lesson?" There was the slightest ironic overtone in Janet's voice, and Cliff scrambled to his feet.

"We were talking about school." His voice was a mixture of relief and embarrassment, and he hurried on. "About school." Realizing he was repeating himself, he stopped, but Janet made no effort to help him, and the pause had grown overlong when she said: "Casey's looking for you. He's at the office."

"I'll be right up." As if glad of the excuse, he walked quickly from the dock.

Janet had turned to go too, but now Lilli blocked her path.

"Do you always have to follow him, wherever he is?" she demanded in cold fury. "Can't you ever let us alone?"

Quietly Janet answered, "I was looking for him because Casey said it was important."

"I don't believe it. You knew we were here together, and you couldn't stand it. You're—"

"Stop it, Lilli." An unexpected steely quality in Janet's voice cut her off. "What you do is your own business. I think you're a little fool, but it's still none of my business. After all, we both have to live here—at least for a while."

The girl's hands clenched. "Why do *you* have to? Nobody wants you to stay."

"I want to stay, and nothing you can do will change it." Janet checked herself, then, more quietly, she went on: "Listen, Lilli. I hoped you and I could be friends. I've tried to be friendly, but you won't let me."

Sullenly Lilli looked at her. "I don't want you to be friendly. I don't want you around me. I know you're in love with him; and whenever he's near me, you—"

Lilli stopped with a gasp, for Janet's hand had closed on her shoulder.

"Look at me, Lilli." Janet's eyes were flashing; her voice deepened with anger. "Look at me."

The girl raised a rebellious face.

"What you just said was a lie, and you know it. Whether or not you're in love with Cliff Bogard has nothing to do with me. He happens to be my boss, that's all—and that's all he ever will be." Janet's hand dropped; and turning, she walked back along the dock.

CLIFF LOOKED UP AS SHE CAME IN. He saw that her cheeks were glowing, and her eyes were bright with anger, but she said nothing, and going over to the map table, picked up a rule and pencil. Steadfastly refusing to meet his eyes, she worked for an hour in dogged silence. Once her pencil point broke; and reaching for another, she went on, never glancing up, while the very air seemed to gather an electric quality of tension.

Covertly watching her, Cliff decided that Casey was right. Women had no place in camp. They were more trouble than all the men. Even Lilli. He thought of her out on the dock and smiled. Lilli was no real problem—he could take care of that. It was Janet who was the problem. He thought of Casey's words: "You're too tough on her," and he wondered if it might be true.

Impatiently he rose and walked toward the door, then turned back. There were smudges of ink on her fingers, and little beads of perspiration on her forehead.

"Let me finish that," he said brusquely. "You go to bed."

Without lifting her pencil, she shook her head. "Your lettering is so terrible," she told him.

For a half-hour more they worked; then Cliff laid aside his papers and reaching over, took the pencil from her fingers. "I'd like to talk to you."

A note in his voice that she had never heard before made Janet raise her head, and for a second they sat in silence, holding each other's eyes; then he said slowly: "Lady, you and I just haven't got along. Maybe it's been my fault. Maybe the trouble was we both had a bad start. I still don't know much about you or why you're here—and if that's the way you want it, that's the way it's going to be. But one thing I'm sure of—you came here for some definite reason of your own, and—"

Cliff paused, then hurried on: "What I'm trying to say is that you've worked hard, and I appreciate it. You've done a whale of a job on that map—better than I ever could. You've been a big help to Casey and the boys in dozens of ways, and if there's anything within reason that I can do to help you get whatever it was you came after, I'll do it."

Perfectly motionless, she sat looking up at him, her hands folded on the drawing-board as if wondering how far she might safely confide in him. At last she gave her quick nod of decision.

"There is a way you can help me—you more than anyone else."

"Tell me how."

"It's not very easy to ask. I have to start by saying I didn't play fair with you. I only used this rubber contract as an excuse to get a visa into New Dixie."

"I know that. What was your real reason?"

She looked down at her folded hands. "I can't tell you."

"That means you don't trust me." The words sounded like an accusation, but he had not meant them to. After all, why should she trust him? "Tell me what you want me to do," he urged.

"Send me out into the plantations. I want to have some reason for getting back into your rubber camps, not just once or twice, but as often as I like. I want to—"

She stopped, for he was shaking his head.

"I'm afraid that's out," he said. "I hate to refuse your first request, but remember—I said anything *reasonable.*"

Her chin went up. "What's unreasonable about my going back into the plantations?"

"I just couldn't afford it. Your capacity for stirring up trouble is marvelous enough around here; if you ever got back into the plantations, it would be practically unlimited." Then, more seriously: "That country is too dangerous, Janet, and it's no place for a woman. You don't know the jungle—even Wade says that. I couldn't let you wander around by yourself, and God knows I'm too busy to watch after you."

Janet's voice was quietly stubborn. "Casey said he'd take me wherever I wanted to go, if that's all that—"

Cliff's hands slammed down on the desk. "Casey's got enough work to do. This is no Sunday-school picnic! We're behind in the work, and unless we come through on time, we lose our contract—you know that. Casey must be getting soft-headed. Why don't you get your boy-friend to take you?"

Her eyes had begun to glow with anger. "If you mean Madison, I'd thought of that. But the people I want to make friends with hate him and his vaqueros. You're the only one who could help me; and since you won't do it, let's forget about it."

He could see her withdrawing into herself again, and he felt like a heel. She would think his offer to help her was nothing more than talk—and she *had* worked hard.

"Look,"—he stirred uncomfortably,—"you know as well as I do that we have a deadline to meet. I've got to have my first cargo of rubber ready by the delivery date—not half or three-quarters, but a full cargo—and we're going to have to do some scrambling to get it together. If I don't, we're licked. So you see why I can't let Casey be sidetracked into chaperoning you over the plantations, And I simply won't have you out there by yourself. Let's compromise: My trips back there are short and quick, but I make them pretty often, and I could take you on some of them if that would help."

"It might." Janet managed a small smile and picked up her pencil. "Thanks."

He saw that her acceptance of the compromise had been far from eager. Whatever she expected to do back there, she clearly preferred to do in his absence, and an echo of his old suspicion returned. For a moment he regretted his offer, but he'd promised to take her—and he'd take her. "And only God can predict the outcome," he told himself solemnly.

And he proved a true prophet on the very first trip.

HE AND JANET HAD GONE by launch up one of the small tributaries in search of a dock-site where the workers could pile their smoked rubber until the flat-bottomed boats brought it over the rapids to the main warehouse. Stopping at a point on the river where the plantations came down to the very banks, Cliff made the boat fast while Janet looked about her, fascinated. The tall, clean trunks of the rubber trees stretched back in equidistant ranks, each tree bearing the long, slanting cut made by the rubber-gatherers; and at the base of every cut hung a small tin cup where milk-white sap was dripping.

"Does this go on all over the plantations?" she asked.

"There's hardly a tree we haven't hung a cup on by this time," Cliff answered. "If you're up here in the afternoon, you can smell the smoke of hundreds of fires, curing the rubber." He pointed. "Look there."

Two men were stooping over a pit dug in the earth, surmounted by a dome of baked clay; through its opening a dense cloud of smoke was pouring.

"They're cooking the rubber!" she exclaimed.

"They're smoking it. If they didn't, the sap would ferment and spoil. See those big pails? They bring the crude sap down from the plantations in those; then they dip a paddle in the pail and let a film of rubber harden on it. That's when they begin smoking it, adding more and more sap, until gradually it builds up into one of those *bolachas.*" Cliff nodded to a pile of dark brown balls of rubber, each about the size of a large pumpkin. "Those *bolachas* weigh a hundred pounds or more apiece, and that's the way we ship the rubber back to the States." Cliff's eyes sparkled. "This is the stuff the whole world moves on. We're making history out here."

LEAVING THE LAUNCH, Cliff led the way upstream toward a little cluster of native shacks; and at sight of them Janet gave a cry of surprise.

"It's Don Antonio's farm!" she said. "Father used to come here often to treat him—he's very old."

"If he's a friend of yours, go see if he's around. I'll be with you later. I want to find out if the channel is deep enough for our boats."

He left her, and Janet climbed the bank.

"Don Antonio!" she called.

No answer; but from beyond the house she heard voices raised, as if in anger; and hurrying up the path, saw the bent figure of Don Antonio standing at the rickety gate. He was leaning on a cane, and just beyond him two men sat their horses—Sloan and one of his vaqueros. Scowling, twirling his rawhide whip, the vaquero was upbraiding the old man in loud Spanish, and Janet caught Antonio's quivering reply.

"But this is my land, señor. Your cattle broke through the fence, and it is true I put them out, but I did them no harm. My boys are mending the fence now."

"Mending it!" The vaquero bellowed an oath. "I cut that fence myself to let our cattle down to water. You and your bastards leave it like it is!"

The old man lifted a despairing hand. "That would mean the ruin of my crop. Every centavo was spent for seed to grow those crops, and they will be trodden under by your cattle." Slowly he straightened; his bony fingers tightened on the cane. "Señor, I will not allow it." Shaking a little at his own temerity, the old man waited.

Not long to wait. Leaning forward in the saddle, the vaquero raised his arm, and like a long thin snake the rawhide whip hissed through the air. A crack sharp as a pistol shot, and a bluish bloody welt stood out across the old man's neck. Once more the arm swung upward, but it never fell—Janet had reached Antonio's side.

"You cowardly beast!" Eyes flaming with anger, she glared at the vaquero. "You vile little cur! How long did it take you to get the courage to beat an old man?"

Whip in hand, the vaquero slipped from his horse.

"You keep out of this," he warned, and his own eyes were glittering. He walked toward her. "Maybe you get the idea you can call me names because the boss is soft on you."

Head erect, she watched him, waiting motionless until he was directly in front of her, then she raised her hand and struck him across the face.

Stung more with surprise than pain, the vaquero seized Janet's wrist and with an oath twisted it so sharply that in spite of herself she gasped. Desperately her free hand beat at his dark cheek, and this time two long lines stood out red with blood. Cursing, the vaquero wrapped both arms about her, pulling her to him, and slowly bent her backward. From his horse Sloan watched in silence.

Hands helplessly pinioned, Janet was fighting with all her strength—but the vaquero's arms tightened, and now as he mauled her, she uttered a low, despairing sob.

The vaquero grinned. "So you don't like—"

A yelp of fright died in his throat. Two hands had locked about his neck and jerked him upright. For a terror-stricken second he looked into Cliff Bogard's blaz-

ing eyes; then the hands released their hold, and a long, clean blow sent him sprawling in the grass.

Sloan had not moved.

For a second the vaquero lay half dazed; then reaching for the brush knife at his waist, he gathered himself and sprang. The vicious lunge barely began; Cliff's left hand closed on the fellow's wrist, and high above his head he raised the squirming vaquero, held him, then flung him outward with all his might. The writhing body hurtled through the air, struck the gate, and shattered it. This time the man lay still.

Cliff turned to Janet. "Are you all right?"

She summoned an uncertain smile. "I think so."

"Then let's go."

At the river-bank Cliff looked back. Beside the path, the vaquero lay face downward, while from his horse Sloan stared after them; and jumping into the launch, Cliff lifted Janet up beside him. "Hurt?"

"No, but I could kill him. Even now I could—" She choked, and big tears of anger filled her eyes.

Starting the motor, Cliff steered the launch out into the stream. One thing puzzled him—why had the vaquero dared to raise a hand against Janet? Cliff had heard tales of Madison's violent temper; and no vaquero would be reckless enough to arouse it, especially where Janet was concerned. The only rational explanation was that the man had been driven to fury by her blow.

Sloan's attitude was more easily understood—he would hesitate to interfere with one of his own vaqueros in an altercation with a Blacklander.

Cliff looked back at Janet. She sat with face partially averted, watching the liana-covered banks, and he could see she was still shaken. Yet even while he watched her, he realized that here was a Janet he would never have believed existed. When she struck that vaquero, she had been all fire. And as he recalled the fellow's outraged surprise, he smiled. Then he felt Janet's eyes on him.

"Do you happen to be laughing at me?" she asked.

"Not a laugh in the world." He saw the little frown gather, and added quickly: "Now don't let's start a battle of our own until I fix you up from your last one." He turned the launch toward the bank, and stopping the motor, took out his handkerchief and dipped one end in the river.

"Come over here," he said. "If I don't police you a little before we get to camp, Casey will swear I've yielded to an ancient impulse and manhandled you."

Submissive as a child, she sat beside him while he wiped the tear-stained cheeks. "Who," he reflected aloud, "who would ever suspect that this quiet, well-mannered person was a jungle cat, with claws and flashing eyes, who jumps vaqueros—"

"I know," she interrupted. "You told me I'd get into trouble, and I did—the very first time."

"Hold still." He moistened his handkerchief again. "I don't understand how people can get tears behind their ears, but you've managed." He gave a last dab at her face, then sat back and surveyed her. "That's fine." He stuffed the handkerchief in his pocket. "You know," he went on, "I often used to wonder what you would be like if you ever dared to let yourself go. Just as you did today. That vaquero surprised you into being human." Cliff was smiling, but his voice was serious. "There was something sublime about the way you cracked down on that two-bit bully. I saw flames in your eyes that matched your hair."

"Don't make fun of me, Cliff."

"I'm not." He laid both hands on her shoulders. "Look at me."

Wonderingly, she obeyed.

"All I'm trying to say is—don't crawl into your shell again. You've built a wall between us that I don't want, because it hides a very real person from me. Don't be afraid of your emotions. It's only when your blood starts singing that you fully live."

"My blood was singing in anger. Is that what you want?"

"No. Anger isn't the only thing that makes the blood sing."

The launch had stopped, the bow resting against the bank, while with both hands on her shoulders he waited, feeling without quite knowing why that they had reached a crossroads. And as if Janet too felt the decisive quality of that moment, she became absolutely still; then slowly her hand moved to her throat in the old gesture of uncertainty. The sleeve of her blouse slipped back, revealing the mark of the vaquero's hand on her arm, and against her skin's whiteness the bruise stood out blue and angry. For the first time Cliff realized she must be in pain.

"Your poor kid!" Swept by a sudden impulse of commiseration too instinctive for thought, he stooped and touched the mark with his lips. She gave a sudden intake of breath, and raising her arm, gazed for a second at the place where his lips had been. Then her dark eyes lifted to his face, holding his eyes with her own. Once again, in a long, tremulous inhalation, her breasts rose, she swayed, and now his arms were about her, and through one blinding second his lips covered hers. Her body had gone limp; then so swift he could not be sure, her own lips softened to his, her arms reached toward him—but in the next instant she shrank out of his arms.

"Please"—he could scarcely hear her voice—"don't ever do that again. Not ever."

"Janet—" He stopped. She walked slowly to the bow of the launch; and when she turned, he knew that once again she had withdrawn into herself.

"I'm sorry," he said.

"Let's not talk about it."

Angry at himself, he started the motor. It would be his own fault if she were more remote than ever. And yet—there had been that brief instant of response.

Night had fallen when they reached camp. A light burned inside the office, and as they entered, Cliff saw Madison standing by the window. A frown darkened the little man's face; and ignoring Cliff, he looked angrily at Janet: "You're late. I thought we had a date for dinner up in New Dixie."

"Sorry," she answered listlessly. "I'm terribly tired."

Eager to visit his resentment on someone, Madison eyed Cliff sourly. "Do you have to play the slave-driver every day and every night? Or did you just take her with you to break our date?"

It was on Cliff's tongue to tell him that Janet had come because she wanted to, but he only answered: "It was part of the job, and we're all working long hours."

Madison turned to Janet again. "I heard what happened at Antonio's farm this afternoon. That vaquero has given me trouble before. Did he hurt you?"

Janet shook her head. "Not much."

But before she could prevent it, Cliff pulled back her sleeve. "This is his handiwork," he said.

The effect was explosive. Madison's eyes contracted to pin-points of sheer malevolence. "I wish I'd known that," he almost panted. "I'd have killed him."

"I suspect he regrets it already," Cliff suggested.

Madison walked toward Cliff and glared up at him.

"Yes, I heard what you did to him. If you don't mind, I'll take care of my own vaqueros myself. You needn't trouble."

Cliff shrugged. "No trouble at all. A pleasure."

Madison's rising anger was far from appeased. "While we're talking about things I don't like," he rasped, "I understand you've been leasing sites for docks and storage space from these Blackland people."

Cliff nodded. "That's correct."

"Are you paying them?"

"Of course."

"Well, stop it. The Blacklanders are squatters on land that belongs to New Dixie. Paying them is a moral admission they have a legal right. When you want to use their land, use it. If they don't like it, knock their ears down, or tell my vaqueros, and they'll do the job. Is that clear?"

"It's clear enough, but not the way I operate. I'll pay as I go."

Madison's temper flared again. "Maybe I'd better remind you that you're not here to help the Blacklanders."

Evenly Cliff answered, "Maybe I better remind you that I'm here for just one thing—to get rubber. Until the Blacklanders interfere with me, I'm not taking sides."

For some reason Madison smiled. "And if they should interfere?"

"I'll cross that bridge when I come to it."

Chapter Fourteen

FOR the next two weeks Cliff threw himself into his work, driving himself and his men with a dogged tirelessness that made even Casey wonder. The loss of their supply foreman was a severe blow, and in spite of their best efforts they were falling behind. Already they should have twice as many rubber-gatherers trained for their task, but some of the camps had not even been completed, and heavy rains had washed out two of their truck bridges. Cliff began to dread the sight of a calendar.

Meanwhile, in camp, Cliff's men grew restive over the surveillance of the solitary rider. Almost every day someone brought news of him. He never came closer than the opposite bank of the river, always sitting his horse perfectly immobile, face turned toward the camp, half hidden by the fringe of jungle. Several of the more adventurous wanted to lie in wait and bring him into camp for questioning, but Cliff vetoed the plan.

Once he thought of going up the river to the little garrison of soldiers and telling them about this mysterious visitor, but quickly dismissed the idea—soldiers would probably be more nuisance than benefit.

Then one dawn Cliff saw the man himself—a shadowy mounted figure cloaked in a poncho, gone before Cliff could get a clear view of him. Giving orders to have his horse saddled, Cliff hurried to Wade's shack.

"I want to find out what that fellow is up to," he told his new supply foreman. "He's been watching us for over a month, and it's getting the boys jittery. I'm certain it's not Vicente—he isn't big enough; but he may be one of Vicente's men, and I want to find out what it's all about. If I hunt him alone, there may be trouble, but you know Vicente, and he trusts you. I wish you'd come with me."

Wade looked unhappy. "I was hopin' you wouldn't ask me, Mr. Bogard. I just can't afford to mix with either side. If I do, I aint ever goin' to feel safe when I'm out huntin'. I wish you wouldn't ask me."

Cliff saw the justice of the hunter's words. "Would you mind if Lilli went along with me?" he asked.

Doubtfully Wade answered: "I don't guess so."

Ten minutes later they were off, Cliff on his sorrel, Lilli riding Wade's trail-wise mare, almost as old as she. The girl was obviously delighted to be with Cliff again, and excited with the prospect of pursuit.

Fording the river below the rapids, they picked up the rider's tracks, fresh and wet in the dewy earth—leading straight for the Blacklands. Twice Lilli, with the sense of direction that jungle life had given her, took short-cuts over paths so dim Cliff hardly saw them, and each time returned to the tracks of their quarry.

Three hours passed. They were well within the Blacklands now; and at last Lilli stopped, her eyes puzzled. "He's heading for Big Swamp, and nobody ever goes back there."

They rode on, and at the end of another mile Cliff reined in his horse—it was his turn to be baffled, for stretching endlessly before him lay a trackless waste of yellow, stagnant water, dotted with stunted trees whose roots twisted and looped above the surface, as if to breathe. About him rose the heavy odor of rotting vegetation, and the thin drone of innumerable insects quavered on the hot, moist air. There was something menacing and malign about the place, something that warned of evil and unseen danger; but the thing that struck Cliff as most strangely ominous of all was the fact that the rider's trail had gone directly into the swamp—and not come out again!

Cliff sat in thwarted silence; then he turned. "Is this the place you call Big Swamp?"

"Yes. It's miles wide."

He raised his reins. "You stay where you are. I'm going in."

In frantic protest Lilli cried: "It's all quicksand! Nobody can go there."

"This fellow did." Cliff forced his unwilling horse down over the bank, and for a few feet the animal splashed through water barely reaching its hocks; then without warning they were struggling in black, bottomless ooze. Lilli screamed; and the horse, terror-stricken, turned and plunged up the bank, where it stood shivering with fear. Cliff flicked three leathery leeches from its shoulder.

"I don't get it," he muttered. "That rider went out there, and he certainly didn't come back."

Once more he rode along the bank, then sat looking over the expanse of stagnant water. With a jerk he straightened in his saddle.

"That's queer!" He pointed to a tree close beside the bank. "That's a red mangrove. And there's another one beyond—a line of them leading into the swamp, and those mangroves only grow in shallow water." His eyes were glowing—perhaps the thing was beginning to make sense. "Has this swamp always been here?" he asked.

"No. They made it, draining the Blacklands."

"Then why couldn't those mangroves mark an old trail that's under water now? I'm going to try it again."

"If you go,"—Lilli's voice shook,—"I'm coming too."

"Don't keep too close to me, then."

This time it took all Cliff's horsemanship to force his sweating animal down over the edge and into the swamp. Nervously sniffing every foot, the horse began wading through the green slime, Cliff guiding him along the line of mangroves. Twice the animal blundered from what must have been a submerged and narrow trail, but both times recovering, went slowly on. Above their heads clouds of insects hovered, and on either side blunt noses of alligators raised cautiously, and small ruby eyes kept patient, hopeful watch. It was like moving in some lost, prehistoric world.

CURVING EVER SOUTH, the mangroves led on until Cliff wondered if they were not taking him back to shore again. Then suddenly he felt his horse quicken its pace, and looking up, saw higher land ahead.

"We're nearly over," he called, and soon they were climbing on hard, flinty ground that gave no sign of tracks. Tall trees and palms had replaced the stunted swamp vegetation; even the air seemed fresher, and Cliff felt a vast relief to have honest earth beneath their horses' feet. Once, leaving the trail, he made his way out over a ledge of rock to the top of a low ridge. About him, far as his eyes could pierce the haze, stretched the stagnant waters of Big Swamp—they were on an island. And the solitary rider was there too.

Cliff stiffened at a faint sound far to the left, as of someone chopping wood; and dismounting, he walked back to where Lilli waited.

"Let's do the rest of this afoot," he said. "It will be less noisy."

Tethering their horses in a clump of bamboo, they moved up the slope—steeper now. The sound of chopping seemed to come from directly ahead; and reaching the ridge-top, Cliff parted the undergrowth, then motioned the girl to his side.

Below them, at the bottom of a long slope, stood a roughly circular stockade, built of upright logs securely lashed together. Within the enclosure four men were walking about, and Cliff saw that at the narrow entrance stood an armed guard.

He put his lips against Lilli's ear. "Who are those men inside the stockade?"

"By their clothes, I think they're Madison's vaqueros."

Cliff nodded. "So do I. More than that, I think they're the vaqueros who disappeared—the ones who never came back." His voice quickened with excitement. "I have a hunch this may be the hiding-place of the Blacklands chief."

KEEPING BEHIND THE DENSE shelter of the undergrowth, they made their way along the ridge; then again they stopped. Just ahead lay a clearing, dotted with mahogany trees, and in its center stood a dwelling of much sturdier construction than Cliff had seen in all the Blacklands.

While they watched, a barefoot Indian boy came out of the jungle, his arms filled with firewood, and disappeared inside the house. For a moment the clearing lay empty of life—then with a whispered word of warning, Cliff flattened to the ground and drew Lilli beside him. A man had emerged from the house and began walking in their direction. He was hatless, dressed in khaki field clothes; and even at that distance Cliff could see he was powerfully built—a man perhaps in middle fifties.

Suddenly, with a choked cry, Lilli started to her feet, and Cliff's arms seized her, pulling her back beside him.

"Be quiet!" He put his hand over her mouth.

She lay trembling; he could see her heart pounding beneath the thin blouse.

"Who is it?" he breathed.

She fought to find her voice. "It's Miss Janet's father—Dr. Norman."

Again Cliff felt her body quiver.

"Don't move," he warned.

The man was walking in their direction, his upraised face turned toward them, while intently Cliff watched him. He whispered: "Are you sure it's Dr. Norman?"

"Certain."

"Is he a prisoner too? He doesn't—" Cliff stopped, for the question was already being answered. A rider had just entered the clearing, and extended his hand in greeting to Dr. Norman. Something in the appearance of that huge powerful figure struck Cliff as familiar, and even before the rider pulled off his sombrero, he recognized Vicente.

Parting the undergrowth, Cliff watched the two talking, while slowly suspicion became a certainty—Dr. Norman was no prisoner. His gestures were clearly those of one in authority, and Vicente's whole attitude one of respectful attention. There could be no other answer—Cliff was looking down on the leader of the Blacklanders, the brain behind their resistance to Madison's vaqueros, a man with a price on his head—and Janet's father.

He gave a short nod of confirmation, for a flood of memories surged in upon him—tales of the sudden coming of the Blackland leader soon after Norman's disappearance; earlier tales of Norman's bitter quarrels with Madison and his vaqueros because of their tyranny over the valley people—it all formed an inescapable pattern.

And somewhere in that pattern Janet had a place too. But where? What was her role in that deadly game of hide-and-seek between vaqueros and Blacklanders? Of one thing only Cliff could be sure—it was because of her father she had been so anxious to return to New Dixie and have Cliff send her out to the Blackland plantations. A host of unanswered and conflicting questions swarmed through his mind, until impatiently he drove them away—the important thing now was to get off the island.

Guardedly he rose to his knees, and touching Lilli's arm, crept back into the protecting screen of bamboo and palm, then keeping well away from the stockade, they mounted, and at the edge of the swamp followed the curving line of mangroves through the stagnant waters.

All their attention was needed to retrace their way along that narrow submerged path; but when at last their horses stood weary and dripping on the farther shore, Cliff turned to Lilli. She sat watching him, her slant eyes smoldering; and without quite knowing why, he felt the presence of a new danger.

"Lilli," he said, "what do you say we forget all this?"

"You mean about seeing Dr. Norman?"

"Yes."

She looked at him with increasing suspicion. "Don't you think Miss Janet knows?"

"I'm not sure of anything, Lilli. But I'm going to find out. At any rate, Vicente must have told Dr. Norman that Janet is here."

"Then wouldn't Dr. Norman tell her where he is?"

"I can't say. And what's the use of guessing? Our job is to keep her secret."

"*Her* secret!" This time the smoldering eyes caught fire. "All you want is to protect Miss Janet."

Cliff saw his blunder. "No, I just don't want to make any mistake. We simply don't know enough about it. Vicente's in this too," he reminded her.

"It isn't Vicente you're thinking of. It's her. Nobody else counts."

Her voice told him all too clearly that here was a peril he should have recognized earlier; and for an instant anger at his own blindness held him silent, then he said simply: "We don't want to hurt anyone, Lilli. We'll have to be careful."

Stormily she interrupted: "Why should I be careful? What is she doing here? She's here to spy for Madison."

"Don't be foolish, Lilli—would Janet spy against her own father?"

Lilli's hands opened and closed. "I don't know. She might. I only know I hate her and her father both. They bring bad luck. Vin hasn't ever had a home since he got mixed up with Dr. Norman. And he takes all the chances—not Dr. Norman. *He* stays back in the swamp, where he's safe! It would be better for Vin and all the rest of us if the vaqueros caught him. Then we'd have peace."

Her voice choked, and she prodded her horse down the trail, while Cliff followed in troubled silence. Only once on the long ride back to camp did Lilli speak again, and that was at the sound of clattering side-arms coming from just ahead. Turning, she breathed the quick warning, "Soldiers!" and with hostile, fearful eyes watched a little squad of *Federalistas* pass them. The lieutenant in charge saluted Cliff briskly and smiled; then at sight of Lilli his eyes lighted and the smile broadened.

"Muy buenos tardes." He bowed low over his saddle-horn and gazed after the two riders until a bend in the trail hid them from view.

ONLY WHEN THE SOLDIERS were out of sight did Lilli breathe freely. *"Cochineros!"* She fairly spat the word, and Cliff recalled the dislike and dread that both the New Dixie people and Blacklanders held for the garrison. Weeks ago that dread had seemed absurd, but now Cliff wondered what would happen if those soldiers knew the secret he and Lilli shared. At the very least it would

mean Norman's arrest, but what it would mean for Vicente, for the Blacklanders' cause, and for Janet herself, Cliff did not even try to guess. . . .

Dusk was deepening when they reached camp, and without a word Lilli slipped from her horse and walked off toward Plato's cage; while watching her, Cliff felt a pang of sympathy. She was like a disconsolate child in need of comforting, but she might be a dangerous child too. Walking away, Cliff told himself he'd better talk to Lilli. But she was in no mood to be reasoned with now.

Nothing was reasonable, for that matter. His mind went back to the puzzle of Janet. Her father was Madison's greatest enemy. How then did Janet reconcile the two relationships? And what was her own relationship to Madison? Was she spying on Madison and the rubber camp both?

WEARY OF THOUGHTS that got him nowhere, Cliff threw himself into his work, driving himself and his men without rest. There was good reason. Only ten days remained before their first cargo of rubber must be ready for shipment; thanks to good organization and hard work, Cliff was now fairly hopeful of meeting the deadline, but he refused to allow any relaxation of effort.

The building of the camps and the main network of roads had been completed, and although the valley people were slow in responding to his call for rubber-gatherers, the high yield of the rubber trees more than compensated for the scarcity of labor. Up in the plantations the smudge of a hundred fires bore witness that men were converting the milk-white sap into great balls of smoked rubber; and the weak, flattish smell of fresh latex hung heavy on the air, night and day.

Already along the banks of the upper tributaries, Casey's men were loading the flat-bottomed barges with their cargoes, tons of pure rubber, ready for their trip down over the rapids, where they would be met by the freighter and taken on the long journey to the States. Barge after barge was being filled; and as delivery day drew closer, the excitement spurred every man in camp to greater effort. Even Wing Toy, the cook, sent hot suppers by launch to the plantation, so that the men could work throughout every precious hour of daylight.

Then, four days before the freighter's arrival, Casey strolled into the office where Janet and Cliff were working and announced casually that the job was done.

"Eight barges full of the best rubber that ever oozed from a tree," he exulted. "Ladies and gentlemen, by morning our first shipment will be on its way down the river."

Cliff nearly upset the inkwell. "You don't mean you've got them all loaded?"

"Loaded and ready. I've had the whole construction crew doin' nothin' but packin' rubber. Tomorrow night you'll see those barges tied up at the dock and waitin' for the freighter." Casey grinned happily. "So let's quit worryin'."

Cliff gripped his foreman's hand. "You're a hairy-chested marvel! This puts us four days ahead of schedule. We can—" He stopped. "Say it again, Casey—it's pure music."

Casey laughed. "It's true, all right. We're over the hump."

Over the hump! Not since Pablo rescued him from the Blacklanders had Cliff felt such a thrill of release.

Too excited for work, Cliff called to Janet: "How's about a celebration? Weren't there some cases of beer with our supplies?"

"They're in the warehouse, marked *'Hands Off.'*"

"Well, it's 'hands on' tonight. And tell Wing Toy we want something special for dinner. Bribe him to make some pies—and none of that canned spinach he's been dosing us with." Jubilantly Cliff beckoned to Casey. "Let's go put that beer in the river to cool."

Responsive to the contagion of Cliff's mood, Janet spent the afternoon in the cook-shack, planning dinner with Wing Toy, helping him fill chocolate pies, then going out into the jungle, she returned with clusters of flowers for the mess-tables. It was almost suppertime when she hurried over to her own quarters, putting on a dress for the occasion, sweeping up her hair, and pinning on a small white orchid.

Never had Wing Toy sounded the supper gong so vigorously; never had the response been so prompt. Casey, his face shining from the effect of an almost abandoned safety razor, took his place at one end of the table, Janet beside him, and Cliff at the head. Behind him, wearing a grin of pure culinary bliss, stood Wing Toy, a steaming platter in his hands, while ranged on either side of the long tables the men sat, their faces turned expectantly toward Cliff.

At sight of them his eyes softened. It had been their dogged determination, their unswerving loyalty to him and to the job that made this celebration possible. His hand swept out toward the tables, crowded with food.

"Go to it, you big bohunks—no gang on earth ever deserved it more."

A laugh, a clatter of knives—then an instant silence. A shadow had fallen across the doorway, and Wade Carroll stood outside the mess-hall.

Cliff waved to him. "Come on in. You're just in time for a banquet."

But the hunter did not move, and something in his eyes brought Cliff a premonition of disaster. It seemed a full minute before Wade spoke.

"I don't guess I'll be very welcome at a time like this, Mr. Bogard," he said dubiously. "I got some bad news." The room had gone completely still. "Those barges of rubber," the reluctant voice went on, "somebody cut 'em loose."

"*Cut* them!" Cliff was on his feet. "Where are they?"

"Smashed up in the rapids. There aint much left."

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

SLOWLY Wade told his story. Coming down the river in his launch, he passed the upper fork where the barges had been moored, and noticed to his surprise that they were gone. He stopped his launch to investigate. The hawsers that had moored the barges to shore were hanging loose in the water; and lifting them, Wade saw they had been cut with an ax. Thoroughly alarmed, he made downstream at full speed, but reached the rapids too late. Three barges had overturned; a fourth, wedged between rocks, still held part of its cargo—the rest of the rubber was strewn for miles along the river.

When Wade finished, no one spoke. All eyes had fixed on Cliff. Not a man within the silent room who did not know what the loss of that cargo meant. Outwardly Cliff gave no sign; only his voice was slower than usual as he said: "We better go take a look, Casey. You boys finish your supper."

Midnight had passed when he returned, but Janet was waiting for him in the office, and from the weary lines in his face she knew that Wade's story had been true. He gave a short smile at her questioning face, and threw himself into a chair, while she poured him a glass of iced coffee. He drank it at a gulp.

"Thanks." A minute passed, then quietly he said: "Well, they got us in a big way."

"But who did it, Cliff?"

"Blacklanders, I suppose. Whoever they were, they knew our habits pretty well. They cut those barges loose in full daylight, just after the last shift came down to camp and before the night guard went on duty. Four

barges smashed against the rocks—but that's not so important. The thing that hits us where it hurts is the loss of the rubber."

"Is it really lost?" she asked.

"It's scattered downstream for miles. Some of it we can get back, but it will take weeks." His eyes moved to the calendar. "And we have just four days." He reached for a sheet of paper. "I'd better radio the coast and cancel that freighter."

As he started to write, she laid her hand on his. "Cliff, does this mean—we're through?"

"I don't know. I'm going to cable Washington for a month's extension. I hate to do it—and I'm not even sure that a month will help. But it'll give us room to turn around in."

"Are things as bad as that?" Her voice was soft with commiseration.

"Actually worse. Even if they extend the time, I'm not sure I've enough money to carry on for another month."

He finished writing his cable while she sat watching him, and as he rose from his desk she said: "Cliff—"

"Yes?"

"Cliff, if six hundred dollars would do you any good, I have it, and I'd be glad—" She stopped, then hurriedly she went on: "It's not just you. It's—well, Casey, and the rest of the boys, and the wife of your partner."

"You hang on to that money," he said almost roughly. "There's no sense in your going broke too." He came toward her and smiled. "Thanks just the same, Janet; but this isn't your funeral, and I'm not going to let it be. You go to bed and forget it."

But it was many days before anyone in camp forgot it. The menace of the Blacklanders, which had almost been forgotten, now revived and hung like a threatening cloud. Workmen no longer felt secure up in the plantations, nor even at headquarters, and Cliff doubled his night guards at all the camps.

For a time he thought of getting the help of the soldiers, but decided against it—they would probably be only an officious nuisance. Better to fight it out alone.

And during those days he wondered about Claribel. Under the terms of his contract, a clash with the Blacklanders could be sufficient grounds for her canceling the agreement; and in that, Cliff knew, she would be guided by Madison's advice. For it was generally accepted that since the onset of her headaches she had turned over all administration of her affairs to Madison. So it surprised Cliff when Janet told him one night that Claribel wanted him to come up the following evening.

He frowned. "What's gone wrong?"

"Nothing." Janet laughed. "She wants to play bridge."

"Look." Cliff heaved a sigh. "I've got plenty of problems down here to keep me amused. Tell her I don't know one card from another."

"Oh, you can't do that. When Claribel asks anyone to visit her, it's a command performance. Besides, she loves bridge more than anything else. If you're good, she'll probably make you a present of the rubber plantations."

"And if I'm bad, she'll probably deport me. Under that one-sided contract, she can do just about anything she wants."

"All the more reason for being nice to her. You can be awfully nice, you know, when you really try."

He looked at the pile of work on his desk. "So now I have to be a politician."

"No. Just don't be an old grizzly bear."

LATER, HE REALIZED HE HAD enjoyed himself. It was the first complete change he had experienced from camp routine, and especially he enjoyed watching Claribel. For she played with a gusto and heavy-handed recklessness that would have ruined a less flexible player, but most of the time she won.

Cliff would have had an even better time, but for Madison. Not only was he a poor loser, but he clearly resented Cliff's being there, and his air of possessiveness with Janet was so marked that it nettled Cliff and thoroughly annoyed Janet. Madison seldom took his eyes from her, and his eagerness to defeat Cliff made him attempt unsound combinations that cost him heavily.

CLARIBEL SAW IT TOO—few things escaped the keen-eyed matriarch; but although she snorted her disapproval more than once, her exasperation did not interfere with her pleasure in the game. She was having a grand time, and when the last hand was over, she leaned back triumphantly—winner of both hand and rubber.

"You thought you had me, Bogard,"—she grinned at Cliff,—"but this old pachyderm still keeps a few tricks up her sleeve. Madison, bring us some sherry." She sighed in complete satisfaction. "Haven't had such a good game since Bob Norman used to play with us. There was a player with imagination." She chuckled. "Bob never let a convention stand in his way, and I used to wonder whether we were playing bridge or poker. But he had ideas." She ceased, lost in memories, then: "Yes, and his ideas were all good, whether it was at bridge, or medicine, or the best way to dig a ditch."

Cliff cast a quick glance at Janet. Her eyes, fixed on the matriarch's, were quietly wistful, as if the words brought back a picture of her father. Cliff turned again to Claribel. "Dr. Norman must have been a remarkable man. The river people speak of him as if he were a saint."

Claribel nodded. "He *was* a remarkable man—and in his way he was a saint. He had to be, to get along with me. Even at that, we fought many a pitched battle, but he was the one man I really trusted. I wouldn't be the battered old recluse I am today if he were alive. He'd have found some way of stopping these headaches."

She was on the point of saying more, but Madison returned with the sherry.

Claribel seemed genuinely disappointed when Janet and Cliff left for the long ride back to camp. "I think we'll start a weekly game," she told Madison. "They can come up to dinner."

Madison laughed. "What makes you think Bogard will be here long enough to make it worth starting?"

"What makes you think he won't?"

"Because I want you to cancel his contract."

Claribel looked up in surprise. "Why should I?"

"He hasn't a dog's chance to deliver his rubber on time, and you'll never get a cent from him once he goes broke. Meanwhile, he's bleeding your plantations for nothing."

The old lady eyed her nephew shrewdly. "Madison, the trouble with you is you're letting personal dislike get the best of you."

"Am I? Then I'm not alone. My vaqueros don't care for Bogard and his gang any more than I do—if you persist in letting him stay, I won't be responsible."

Claribel gathered up the cards. "Bogard is doing his best to make good. He's honest, and he's a fighter. And what's more, I like him."

"I noticed it." Madison's voice had sharpened. "Strange how women go for those big, dumb animals. Old and young both—"

"So that's it!" Claribel's chuckle interrupted. "You've caught on at last that Janet likes him too!" She became suddenly serious. "Madison, why don't you give it up? You made a perfect fool of yourself tonight over her. You've been making a fool of yourself for years. Janet will never marry you—especially not now when Bogard's in the picture. You're only making yourself unhappy and a little absurd. Give her up."

His mouth had set in a thin line, and she saw her nephew's eyes were glittering.

"So I'm absurd, am I?" His voice trembled. "Well, it isn't losing Janet that makes me absurd—it's being under your thumb, like a damned lackey, letting you run my life." He came closer. "You broke it up once before between Janet and me—don't ever try it again. This time it will take more than Bogard and you to keep me away from her."

He stopped. For a moment Claribel looked at him, then turning, she went slowly up the stairs. . . .

Events favored Cliff through the heartbreaking weeks of building up another cargo of rubber. First, in answer to his cable, Washington allowed him a month's extension on the delivery date, but added the warning that further delay must mean the termination of his contract.

Cliff threw the cable over to his construction foreman. "Two strikes on us, Casey," he commented. "Next time it's the doghouse permanently."

A second factor favorable to Cliff was less understandable, and for a time he regarded it with suspicion—within a week after the disaster to his barges, a dozen Blackland families offered their service as rubber-gatherers, first among them being the stalwart sons of old Don Antonio.

"I'm wondering if there's a booby trap in this," he confided to Casey. "Why should those people ruin one cargo for us, and then offer to help gather another?"

Casey shrugged. "At riddles I'm no good. But those birds know the country, and with a little trainin' they'll make fine gatherers, so I'm all for takin' 'em on—our job's to get another cargo together."

"And then watch it like hawks," Cliff amended.

MADISON had not been down to camp since the day Cliff had beaten his vaquero, and so when Cliff found him sitting in the office late one evening, he was certain it was no social visit.

Madison's first words proved that. Visibly excited, he barely waited until Cliff entered the room. "I wonder if you know that the Blacklanders are getting set to raid you?" he demanded.

Slowly Cliff answered: "No, I didn't."

"Well, they are. This afternoon I heard that they're gathering their riders from all over the Blacklands to run you out. One gang is to jump your crews in the plantations while the others raid this camp." Madison looked expectantly at Cliff, but getting no response, went on: "You told me once that your men could take care of themselves. Do you still think they can?"

"How many men can the Blacklanders raise?"

"Nobody knows."

Cliff walked the length of the office. So his suspicions about a booby trap had not been idle! By employing the Blackland rubber-gatherers, he had played into their hands—they knew just where he was most vulnerable. And he was vulnerable enough—he could defend his headquarters camp, but up in the plantations were docks and bridges, thousands of pounds of smoked rubber, and more than a hundred cabins, all so scattered they were impossible to protect. Worse still, Cliff knew that at the first sign of conflict half his native workers would quit, and to be faced with further delay meant the end of everything.

He glanced at Madison. After all, he had nothing more than this one man's word for the story. "How sure are you of this?" he asked.

"Sure enough to take the trouble to warn you. If you doubt it, you only have to wait." Madison's voice sharpened. "Bogard, don't be a fool! You can't afford to let those raids come off. I can't afford it either, for in a way you people are under our protection. It will be bad for all of us if the Blacklanders get the idea they're running this show. There's only one thing to do—hit them before they hit you."

"To hit them, you have to know where they are."

"And that's just what I happen to know."

"Is that why you came here?" Cliff asked. "To warn me?"

"More than that; I came here to join forces with you. Together we can give them something to remember for a long, long time. You bring the best of your fighting men, and I'll round up my vaqueros. We'll close in on their camp tonight."

"Where is their camp?"

"Near Big Swamp."

Cliff started. If Madison's story was true, Big Swamp would be a likely place for the Blacklanders to gather. And, as Madison said, there could be no better way to prevent a raid than by striking first—always provided the story was true. Cliff saw clearly enough that Madison might be lying to force him into conflict with the Blacklanders, but he didn't dare dismiss the tale and risk an attack that might cripple him. He couldn't afford to guess wrong. He had to know the truth, for in his present position any more mistakes meant disaster.

"I'll give you my answer tomorrow night," he said at last.

"You're a fool!" Madison rose angrily to his feet. "Tomorrow may be too late."

"I'll take that chance."

And in spite of all Madison's urging, Cliff could not be moved from his decision. But the second his visitor had gone, Cliff called Casey and told him of the threatened attack.

The foreman swore softly. "Let's jump 'em right away," he urged.

Cliff shook his head. "That's exactly what Madison wants. If he's lying, we'd make the mistake of our lives to start trouble with the Blacklanders, and if he's telling the truth, we'll be making just as big a mistake by not attacking them first."

"Then whatever we do may be wrong."

"That's the sweet part of it. We can't wait to see what happens, for if they're going to raid us, it may come tomorrow, or even tonight. One thing we can do is to station some of the boys along both river trails." Cliff gave a long sigh. "I wish we had a dozen high-power rifles."

"That don't bother me—the Blacklanders haven't got rifles either. They bank on those brush knives, and at close range our boys are pretty hot stuff with a pick handle." Casey's eyes were brightening at the prospect of a fight. "But I'd rather it was those snooty vaqueros we was tanglin' with."

Cliff sat for a time in troubled silence; then, reaching a decision, he raised his head. "We've got to find out what's going on," he told Casey. "And there may be a way to do it. I'm leaving camp early tomorrow morning. If I don't get back by supper, I want you to come for me with all the men you can get together."

Casey's face reflected his surprise. "Where you goin', Boss?"

"Lilli will know."

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

IT was barely dawn when Cliff saddled and took the trail up through the dripping jungle to Big Swamp. The night air, cool and damp, came flowing down from the hills, but he was only dimly aware of its refreshing touch. A host of doubts beset him as he rode, and the closer he approached the swamp, the more he questioned his own wisdom in coming. But he could think of no other way.

At the edge of the swamp he forced his unwilling horse down over the bank and out through the stagnant water, following the line of mangroves until at last the low contour of the island showed dimly through the mist.

Head bent forward, eyes intent upon his narrow foothold, he had almost reached the island's edge when he felt his horse rear, and looking up, saw Vicente watching him from the bank.

For a bare instant Cliff hesitated; then touching his horse, climbed out of the marsh. Directly before Vicente, he reined in.

The Blacklander spoke first. "How did you find this place?"

"I followed Dr. Norman's tracks."

"You were foolish to come here; you will never leave."

"Dr. Norman can decide that. My business is with him."

"And my business is with you." Vicente took a step nearer. "Get off that horse." His voice quivered with the eagerness of a hunting dog; the mouth all too clearly foretold his intention to force a fight—and conflict was the one thing Cliff wanted to avoid.

"I have no quarrel with you, Vicente," he said quietly. "I came here to see your chief."

At the big 'breed's laugh, Cliff realized that Vicente thought he was afraid. But it was too late. Before he could speak again, Vicente's arm wrapped about his waist and ripped him bodily from the saddle. Towering over him, the Blacklander took a half step back, then raising his open hand, struck Cliff full in the face. The force of the blow whirled Cliff to the edge of the bank, and barely he saved himself from falling.

Slowly he turned; his own eyes had gone red. His face was on fire, and something within him snapped. The impelling need to avoid a quarrel, the purpose of his visit, were both forgotten.

"You asked for this—I didn't," he growled. "Come on!"

No time for more—swift as a cat Vicente was on him. Twice Cliff struck; twice his fists beat into that huge, dark face; but heedless of the punishing blows, the big breed closed in for the kill.

Before the menace of Vicente's outstretched hands, Cliff gave ground, keeping just beyond arm's-length; then, gathering himself, he struck again. His feet caught in the undergrowth and he fell, but was up as Vicente's fingers fastened about his shoulder, and with the strength of desperation Cliff lashed out wildly with both hands. For a second the Blacklander's grasp weakened, and Cliff jerked back with all his might. His shirt ripped to the waist, he felt the fiery sting of lacerated flesh, but he was free.

Bearlike and crouching, bruised and bloody face thrust forward, Vicente was coming in again, his great gorilla hands weaving horribly. Steadily, mercilessly, he was driving Cliff back to where there would be no room to escape those avid, clutching hands. Striking, dodging, slashing out with long, clean blows, he knew his only hope lay in keeping Vicente away.

Almost at the edge of the swamp now—and for both of them almost the end of human endurance. Their breath came in strident, labored gasps; Vicente's face was bleeding, and Cliff's torn shoulder burned like fire, but all unmindful and beyond the stab of pain they fought on, like animals, while inch by inch Vicente drove Cliff nearer the edge.

Once more a savage rush forced him a step backward. There could be no more retreat—he was on the very brink. Ten feet below him lay the yellow waters of the swamp; and steadying himself, Cliff sprang. Squarely on Vicente's jaw his fist struck home; he saw the big breed wince, but in that same instant two hands closed viselike about his throat—and held. Frantically, arms hammering like pistons, Cliff rained blow after blow into the other's face, but the fingers only tightened.

Cliff's lungs were crying for air; his heart pounded in an agony of suffocation, and helplessly he clawed at the steel wrists, while Vicente's bruised and swollen lips twisted in a smile. Little by little Cliff felt his knees weakening; a mist gathered before his eyes; and dully, deeper than any physical pain, he felt the black agony of defeat. With one last desperate summons of strength, he threw himself backward over the bank, pulling Vicente after him.

Locked together, turning slowly, the two men struck with a splash. Thick, slimy water closed over them, but those strangling hands never relaxed; and gathering his feet beneath him, Cliff thrust them upward into Vicente's chest and kicked. Torn violently apart by the sudden impact, the fingers loosened, and Cliff fought his way to the surface for the supreme gift of air.

Waist-deep, he crouched, coughing the water from his lungs, and with trembling hands wiped the scum out of his eyes. He took a wabbly step toward the bank, but at a sound he whirled.

Scarcely a yard away Vicente struggled in the swamp. Shoulder-deep, eyes glazed with terror, the 'breed was beating the stagnant water to yellow froth, and Cliff felt himself sicken in horror—Vicente had been caught in a quicksand pocket. Helplessly clutching the air, the huge hands rose, but the man's very efforts drew him deeper. Already his shoulders were settling beneath the surface.

Frantically Cliff waded toward him, then stopped. Useless to try pulling him out—worse than useless, for he would only join Vicente—and scrambling up the bank, Cliff raced to his horse. The animal reared in fright, but seizing the bit, Cliff led him to the water's edge, uncoiled the reata from his saddle, and tied one end to the saddlehorn.

With the rope between his teeth, he slid back into the swamp, but at the first step felt the mire sucking at his ankles, and throwing himself flat, he inched forward. A second later he had slipped the noose beneath Vicente's armpits, and hand over hand dragged himself back to shore. Weakly he staggered—he was near the end. For a moment everything reeled before his eyes; then steadying himself, he seized the bit. The horse moved a few steps; the rope grew taut.

Again Cliff pulled. The horse strained against the sudden weight, and from down in the swamp came a gurgling moan, while slowly, like some monster of the depths, the form of Vicente rose from the ooze that covered him, and was dragged to solid ground.

Kneeling, Cliff loosened the rope. The Blacklander's eyes were closed, he lay motionless, scarcely breathing; and twice Cliff tried to raise him, but now the strain of that punishing duel was taking its toll. Feebly, for the last time, Cliff tried to lift the heavy body; then all the world went black.

He woke to a sense of coolness and light. Vaguely he realized that he was lying on a cot, and that by his side an Indian woman sat fanning him. He looked down and saw he was stripped to the waist, and that his shoulder had been bandaged.

Slowly, as his head cleared, he began piecing together disjointed fragments—Vicente, the fight, something else. Something—it was important, but he was too tired to remember. He closed his eyes, giving himself up to the delicious sensation of utter rest, and again he may have slept; then at the sound of a door creaking he saw a man bending over him.

A man not tall, but with strong, vigorous shoulders and thick red hair, graying at the temples. The brow rose high and broad, but it was the eyes that held Cliff—gray eyes, shrewd and understanding—gazing at him with a look Cliff suddenly recognized—Janet's look, so searching it was almost disconcerting—and in that impact of mutual appraisal, Cliff recognized Dr. Norman.

Little lines of amusement had formed about the Doctor's eyes. "You and Vicente play rough," he said, and his lips parted, showing strong white teeth.

"How did I get here?" Cliff asked faintly.

"I brought you, with the help of two of my boys. You've only been here an hour. How do you feel?"

"Sore."

"You should. But you're a very strong man. So is Vicente."

"Vicente!" Cliff sat bolt upright. "Where is he?"

"In the other room. He does not feel quite as well as you. He swallowed too much swamp water." Again Norman smiled. "I've been trying to persuade him it is not absolutely necessary to tear you to bits as soon as he recovers." Then the little lines of amusement vanished, and he asked, "Why did you come here?"

"To see you."

"What do you want with me?"

"I want to know why your men are getting ready to raid my camp and plantations."

The gray eyes showed sudden interest. "Did Madison tell you that?"

"Yes."

"I thought so." Norman straightened a fold in Cliff's bandage. "That's better, isn't it? Madison," he added as an afterthought, "is a liar. If I wanted to raid you, what do you think kept me from doing it before?"

"One hundred fighting men."

THE DOCTOR GAVE A LITTLE LAUGH. "Not at all. Your hundred fighting men can't work and fight too. My riders could have raided you at any time of the day or night. No, it wasn't fear that kept us back. Neither was it any reluctance on Vicente's part—nothing would have pleased him more."

"Then why didn't you?"

"Why should I help Madison Florian? What he wanted, and what he expected, was for us to raid you. The only reason he ever let you start your work here was because he counted on our fighting you. That would have given him an ally against us and might have beaten us. It was better to bear with you for a time than play into Madison's hands."

Cliff had not taken his eyes from Norman's face. There was neither pose nor heroics about this grizzled, low-voiced physician—instead there was a quality of flint that Cliff could not be quite certain how to deal with.

"As it is," the Doctor went on, "you yourself have taken the decision out of my hands."

"How?"

"By coming here. You must realize I can't let you go again, now that you know the secret of this island?"

"What will you do with me?"

"Keep you here. You will disappear just as some of Madison's vaqueros have disappeared. Without you, I doubt that your work will be carried on. Your men will leave."

Cliff smiled. "As simple as that."

"Perhaps not quite that simple. There will be investigations and searching-parties. Your Government will write a few notes, and the soldiers will show great activity—temporarily—but nothing much will happen, and meanwhile your camps and your docks and bridges will be rotting back to jungle again."

He spoke with a cool, detached confidence, as if the outcome was beyond doubt, and the menace of Cliff's presence already disposed of, but with equal coolness Cliff answered: "I think you're making a mistake. If I were really your enemy, I could have told Madison's vaqueros and the soldiers yesterday about you and this island. It would have been very easy for them to surround this place and take you."

"Why didn't you?"

"I've been asking myself that question. Perhaps the one reason is—Janet."

At that name a look came to Norman's eyes that held something of fear, but more of hunger, and Cliff asked, "Hasn't Janet told you I'm no enemy of the Blacklanders?"

Almost inaudibly the answer came: "Janet has told me nothing." Then, still lower: "Janet believes I am dead."

In that strange second of revelation Cliff grasped the reason for those dawn vigils of the solitary rider above his camp. Only an impelling, overpowering need to see his daughter could have driven Norman to risk that long ride over trails where Madison's vaqueros and the soldiers rode.

Incredulously Cliff burst out: "Do you mean she still doesn't know you're alive?"

"Janet knows nothing."

In Cliff's voice, disbelief gave way to anger. "You let her go through two years thinking you were dead, while you hide away on this damned island, fomenting trouble—"

"That's enough!" Norman's eyes struck fire, and for a moment he struggled to keep his temper, then more calmly he asked, "Why should I justify myself to you?"

The two men held each other's hostile gaze, and at last Cliff said: "I think you're right. I made a mistake in coming here. I thought there might be some way of preventing trouble between your people and mine. I suppose I thought there had to be some good about the man who was Janet's father—but I was wrong. Any father who would let his daughter suffer two years of doubt and uncertainty hasn't enough humanity in him to be reached by anyone. You may be a good leader of lost causes, but you're a damned poor father."

Cliff sat up. "And now, I'll tell you something you don't know. You're not going to keep me here. I left word at camp that if I'm not back tonight, my men are to come for me. There is one person down there who knows not only where you are, but *who* you are; and unless I go back and stop it, Madison's vaqueros and the soldiers will have your secret before dawn. That will be a happy way for Janet to learn her father is alive."

Norman made no move. His eyes burned deep into Cliff's, and after a moment he gave a short sigh. "I wonder," he said deliberately, "if you are lying."

"You know I'm not. But the easiest way to find out is to keep me here and see what happens."

Norman nodded in that quick, decisive way so characteristic of Janet. "Yes, I believe you. You are an intelligent man—it is a pity we are on opposing sides." He walked across the room, then turned. "Shall we make a compact? In return for keeping the secret of this island, you are free to go whenever you want."

"It's a bargain," Cliff answered.

NORMAN ASKED, AS IF EAGER to have him gone, "Do you feel well enough to ride?"

"I'm stiff, but I can make it."

"Good. I will lend you a shirt, and your horse is outside." Again his gray eyes searched Cliff's face. "I cannot ask you to promise, but it would be best for all of us if no word of this reaches Janet."

"Why?"

"For her sake. If she knows I am here, she will come to me, and I would not have her share the life of a man with a price on his head. The time may be soon enough when she will have to know about me—but not yet. And now, let me show you something."

He led Cliff to an inner room where, on a cot, Vicente lay. At sight of Cliff he tried to rise, but Norman's hand gently forced him back. "Rest, my son," he said. "The fight is over."

Vicente's lips moved painfully. "We will fight again."

Cliff shook his head. "Not if I can help it. One fight like that will last me a lifetime."

Following Norman out to where his horse was tethered, Cliff silently mounted, but as he lifted the reins, he looked down at the Doctor and said: "I came here hop-

ing for peace. You and I might have helped each other, for I need men—a lot of men—to gather rubber. You could have brought work and pesos to every farmer in the valley, but instead of that you would rather turn your Blacklanders against me and make it tough for both of us. Well, that's the way you want it, and there's nothing I can do to change it; but if I'm forced to take sides with Madison and his vaqueros, it won't be my fault—it will be yours." Turning, Cliff rode down the bank and out into the swamp.

Back on the firm earth of the mainland, he stopped and for a time sat looking over the stagnant water, where always a thin, ghostly mist seemed to hover. What had his visit to Norman accomplished? Very little so far as any actual understanding was concerned; yet he had a feeling, too intangible for words, that Norman did not intend to make an immediate raid. Even if he had, he could scarcely attack now, without Vicente; and the big Blacklander would not be able to ride for days.

And as he sat there by the swamp's edge, Cliff realized that without any conscious deliberation on his part, he had come to a decision of his own—he would never join Madison. However great the need might be, he couldn't stomach the idea of having Madison and his swaggering vaqueros as allies. Or was that the honest reason? Wasn't it really that he couldn't face the thought of attacking Janet's father?

With a little sigh, Cliff picked up the reins. "I'll probably end by having Madison and Norman both against me," he murmured. And as he rode, his thoughts turned to the riddle of the grizzly-haired doctor. Why had he deliberately let the world think he was dead? Why had he left New Dixie, where he was loved and respected, to become the outlaw leader of an obscure cause? Most unanswerable of all, why, for two years, had he let Janet endure the anguish of believing him drowned?

It was nearly dark when he rode into camp, and the first person he met was Lilli. Standing beside Plato's cage, she had been feeding the big jaguar; but now she came running, and at sight of his bruised throat she gasped: "You all right?"

Cliff dismounted. "I'm still living."

She laid a hand on his arm. "You went back there again to see—him?"

In her eyes Cliff saw the cloud of suspicion and resentment that he should have gone without telling her.

Lilli's hands closed. "Did she know you went?"

"Who?"

"You know who—Miss Janet."

"Nobody knew, Lilli. I'll tell you all about it later, but just now I'm hungrier than that jungle cat. Be a good kid and get the cook to send some sandwiches and coffee to the office."

RELUCTANTLY SHE WALKED AWAY, and unsaddling his horse, Cliff entered the little office. Janet was at work behind his desk, and for a moment he stood in the doorway, watching her head bent over the paper; then he took a step forward, and at the sound she looked up and breathed a glad sigh of relief.

"What's the idea of all this mysterious disappearance?" she called, and laid down her pencil. "Nobody knew where you were—except Lilli."

He was suddenly uneasy. "What did Lilli say?"

"She kept looking up the trail all afternoon, and whenever any of the men came in, she asked if they had seen you. She was frightened, and I suppose it was contagious, for by suppertime I was jittery too. I asked her if she knew where you were, or whether you were in danger, but she wouldn't answer. I could see something was wrong, and I begged her to tell me what it was, and then—" Janet broke off. "I think she really hates me, Cliff. She told me that if anything happened to you, she would make me pay. She was in such deadly earnest, it was frightening. I suppose you know she's in love with you."

"A kid like that—" he began.

"Lilli isn't a kid. She's old enough to have all the emotions of a grown woman and none of the self-control."

"If Lilli's in love with anybody," Cliff answered, "it's with Vicente."

"She's been angry at Vicente for months. She felt neglected, and then you came along and were nice to her." Janet gave a little helpless laugh. "You'll never know much about women, Cliff. Maybe Lilli does love Vicente still—that doesn't keep her from having a full-size dislike for me because of the time you and I spend together."

Silent, Cliff frowned down at the floor. Life was becoming difficult enough without Lilli adding to its complexities—he'd have a talk with her tomorrow.

But tomorrow's stream of events crowded all thought of Lilli from his mind.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

CLIFF heard about it first from Casey. A band of vaqueros, probably acting under Madison's orders, had ridden through the plantations and came upon three rubber-gatherers building a leanto shelter. Recognizing them as members of a Blackland family friendly to Cliff, the vaqueros ordered them off the plantation and began tearing down their half-finished shack. Just about that time Casey and his construction crew chanced along, and the vaqueros were told in Casey's bluntest terms to get out of the plantations and stay out.

The affair was not merely an isolated incident, for the same afternoon Cliff learned that groups of vaqueros were systematically visiting every household that had been gathering rubber for him, ordering the men to keep off the plantations; and when one, more courageous than the rest, refused, Sloan had beaten him to insensibility.

When Cliff Bogard heard the news, his only comment was, "So that's the way it's going to be."

He walked slowly over to the office, and inside found Janet, her face so pale he asked anxiously: "What's wrong?"

For a moment she did not answer, then still refusing to meet his eyes, she said: "I just heard something I don't want to believe."

He could see she was fighting against unwelcome news, but in a moment she went on: "Don Antonio left here a few minutes ago. Remember him?"

"The old fellow you saved from a beating?"

"You saved him—I didn't. He told me that his two boys were up the river the day your barges were cut loose. They saw who did it."

"Who was it?" Cliff almost shouted the words.

Wide-eyed, she looked up at him. "Madison and Sloan."

The blood had risen to Cliff's face. Twice he paced the length of the office, then halted before Janet. "Why didn't Antonio tell us sooner?" he demanded.

"He was afraid. But today the vaqueros burned his barn because the two boys had been working for Casey. He's leaving tonight to go back into the Blacklands, where he'll be safe; and before he went, he told me about Madison. At first I couldn't believe it." Wonderingly she shook her head. "I've known Madison for so many years. I used to think I knew him better than he knew himself. . . . Cliff, it's just not possible he'd do a thing so mean and cowardly. What would he have to gain?"

"Plenty."

"Then you really believe he did it?"

Cliff sat down behind his desk. "Let's not kid ourselves, Janet. Madison loves you and hates me. He

would never have let me get started here except for two things: First, it gave him an opportunity to have you near him; and second, he had every reason to suppose my gang would start a war with Vicente. That would be his chance to jump in and get rid of the Blacklanders for all time. The idea was perfect from his standpoint; but it didn't happen, so Madison changed his tactics. He's tried to stir up trouble between us and the Blacklanders, and when that didn't work either, he began trying everything he could to delay my work and void our contract. Intimidating our workers, cutting loose our barges—that's just part of it. This morning two of his vaqueros tried to mix it up with one of my boys. They got the beating of their lives, but all this is slowing us up. We can't let these things go on—it's better to have a showdown." Cliff glanced toward the clock. "I think I'll go up and see Madison tonight."

Janet looked at his stony, set face and asked quickly: "Cliff, will you do something for me?"

"Of course."

"Before you see Madison, let me talk to Claribel."

"Why?"

"I don't like the way your jaw is locked."

His face relaxed, but he shook his head. "What's the use of talking to Claribel? She doesn't know what's going on; she thinks everything Madison does is perfect. And besides, the last time you tried diplomacy with Claribel, you almost got me thrown out."

"This is different. She's been more friendly lately. The very fact that Madison has to resort to these tactics shows that Claribel isn't against you. If she were, she could simply break your contract—you've always said it was drawn up that way. Cliff," Janet pleaded, "let me ride up now. I'll be back before midnight; and if I fail, you can still talk to Madison."

Watching her earnest face, Cliff smiled in retrospect. "I wonder if you realize how you've changed from the girl I used to call a rabbit."

"I know I have. I don't feel afraid any more. You've kept me so busy, you slave-driver, I haven't had time to be afraid!"

"It isn't that. It's because you've learned a big secret—the secret that nothing is very terrible, once you make up your mind to face it."

"Then you'll trust me to talk to Claribel tonight?"

He capitulated. "Give the old sea-cow my love."

INSIDE CLARIBEL'S HIGH-CEILINGED office, Janet waited with a racing heart. At the prospect of seeing the volcanic matriarch, she felt much less hopeful than she had down at camp; and when the door opened, she turned with a start—to find Madison.

He closed the door carefully and came forward. "I got your message."

"It was Claribel—"

"Claribel's enjoying another headache. Won't I do?" He drew out a cigarette. "As a matter of fact, I've seen so little of you, I'm even grateful for accidents like this."

She could tell he was nervously anxious to learn what had brought her; for he suddenly burst out: "I know why you came, of course. Bogard sent you."

"You're wrong." She shook her head; then quietly she added: "Madison, I don't want to believe that you're behind all these vicious attempts to ruin Cliff Bogard. I don't understand what you're doing."

Still sullen, he answered: "You haven't tried very hard to understand, have you?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that for the last month you've done your best to avoid me. Whenever I rode down to camp, you were always busy with your damned map or some other excuse. Claribel says I'm a fool to think you'll ever care for me, and maybe I am; but when you told me you wanted to stay in New Dixie, I thought you wanted to be near me. I know now it isn't that—I'm beginning to think it was because you wanted to be near Bogard, and if it is—"

She checked his rising anger with a swift motion. "It wasn't, Madison," she said gently. "I can swear it."

His eyes lost their sullen resentment and began to take on the old look of fatuous devotion. He leaned over her chair. "Janet," he whispered, "we used to be so close I could tell you everything. But I'm not sure just where you stand any more. Is it because you don't want me to make love to you? I couldn't bear to think there's another man—"

She drew sharply away from him. "Do we have to go through that again?"

A gust of anger shook him. "Yes, I think we do. I've loved you ever since you were a kid—when you used to tell me I was jealous of my own shadow. I still am, so don't ever forget it." He bent closer. "When you came here with Bogard, you wanted a job so that you could stay. I didn't know why, and I didn't care. The point is I helped you then—now it's time for you to help me."

"Why do you need help, Madison?"

HIS HANDS CLOSED SPASMODICALLY. "How can you ask that! You know just as well as I do that all I have to look forward to is to be Claribel's hired man. She'll live to ninety, and by the time she dies, I'll be a doddering old man with my life behind me. When I got her to let Bogard in, I thought I could change all that—I meant to use him to smash the Blacklanders, and once they were out of the way, it wouldn't be hard to take over the rubber work myself. Well, that was a mistake—he didn't smash them. He either bought them off or bluffed them. He's no more use to me, and I'm going to force him out and run those plantations myself. I'll turn it into a business even better than cattle. What a fool I'd be to sit here and watch Bogard make a fortune from trees my own people planted!"

There was greed in his eyes now, greed and a low-burning hate; and with a wave of almost physical nausea Janet moved back from him.

"Why do you tell me this?" she asked.

"Because I need you. I need you to persuade them in Washington that I can take over his job—and with your help, I can. You know the ropes, and Bogard's men like you—we can get the best of them to work with us." Madison was warming to the prospect. "Bogard never wanted you here. But I want you. It could mean a lot for both of us, Janet. You could have anything in the world—"

He stopped, and with a little sibilant intake of breath stood watching her. Then very slowly she asked the question she dreaded to have answered. "Madison, was that why you cut loose those barges of rubber?"

His eyes changed, but he said nothing.

"Was it?" she persisted.

Still no answer, and with a deep sigh she turned away—there was no need for answer. His eyes were answer enough; and slowly she shook her head.

"I don't know you any more." Her low voice was vibrant with regret. "When I came back here, I saw you had changed, but I didn't think you were a thief." She picked up her riding-crop. "This is the end between us, Madison. You make me want to forget every hour I spent with you. You make me feel unclean."

Against the cold finality of her words, Madison fought to steady himself; then he rasped out, "So Claribel was right! You're in love with him." His face had gone livid, and his damp fingers fastened about her wrist. "*Are* you in love with him, Janet? By God, if you are—" His strange, colorless eyes fixed on her face. "I told you years ago I'd never let anyone else—"

She cut him off. "Stop it, Madison. You can't frighten me."

She opened the door, but the torrent of his hate followed her into the hall. "This isn't the end," he shouted.

"I'll make you sorry you were ever born." His voice cracked. "Sorry you were ever born—both of you."

Out over the mesa, she urged her horse to a run, as if in distance she might blur the memory; but above the clattering hoofs she heard again the words, *"Sorry you were ever born."*

AN HOUR LATER, still pale from the encounter, Janet told Cliff of the quarrel.

"It's like death," she said at the end, "the death of someone you've known so long. He wasn't that way in the old days—really, he wasn't. He was sensitive and easily hurt, and he was always getting into trouble in little ways. But now—" Janet's voice broke. "I don't want to think about what he might do. I shouldn't have gone up to New Dixie."

"It wasn't your fault," Cliff reassured her. "This break was bound to come—your quarrel will only bring it out in the open. I think from now on things will move fast." For a moment he fell silent, then thoughtfully he said: "It's the old poison of wanting power. Madison hates everyone and everything that stands in his way. He probably hates Claribel even more than he does me." He walked to the door, and for a time stood looking at the darkened buildings of the camp. "Well, if Madison sets out to get me, it won't be easy to stop him. But I promise him a fight he'll remember." Unexpectedly he smiled. "And this time, for a change, you and I will be fighting on the same side."

Their eyes met and held. Then she said: "Cliff, remember once you asked me why I really came here?"

"Yes. And you wouldn't tell me."

"I'll tell you now. I came here to find my father."

Then she *did* know Norman was alive! Cliff waited, conscious that his heart had quickened. Janet went on:

"For a long time after the news came to me that Father had been drowned, I never doubted the truth of it. It all seemed so final and complete. The searching-party brought back word they had found his camp, his medical instruments—even his sun helmet. But months later I heard of a Portuguese missionary who had been sick with tropical fever near the big swamp that borders the Blacklands. He said that for two days a doctor, either British or American, had taken care of him. The doctor only came after nightfall; he spoke very little, and as soon as the fever dropped, he went away. But the missionary said there was a bloodstone ring on that doctor's hand."

Janet looked up into Cliff's attentive face. "I knew that ring, Cliff—I gave it to Father. That same day I went to Washington and begged for a visa to New Dixie. I pulled every wire—for weeks I almost lived at the State Department—but they told me no one could have a visa in wartime except for official business.

"I wouldn't give up. You can't realize the torture of not knowing whether someone you love is dead or alive. I wrote Claribel, and she had Madison investigate, but he sent word that it was impossible for Father to be alive without the vaqueros hearing about it. Finally, I learned that the Rubber Division wanted to open the New Dixie plantations, and I went back to Washington to see if I could get them to send me down. When they found out I had lived here, it was easy to persuade them I might be able to help you."

"Tell me one thing," Cliff interrupted: "Was it about your father you wanted to talk with Vicente the night he captured us?"

"Yes. The first day I saw Vicente at Wade Carroll's, I was sure he knew something. I still think he does. But he would only say he had known Father long ago."

"Have you spoken of this to Madison since you came back?"

Janet shook her head. "Father and Madison never liked each other. Father hated the way Madison's vaqueros treated the people up the river."

Watching her, her head thrown back beneath the light, and earnest eyes on his, Cliff realized that at last she had dropped her guard against him. More than anything in the world he wanted to say something that might hold out hope to her; but he knew it was not hope she wanted—it was certainty; and to tell her the truth at this time might mean disaster.

Mutely he touched her hand; and in that simple, inarticulate gesture she sensed the offer of his friendship, for tears were in her eyes. She gave a tremulous laugh. "You don't know how much it means not to sail under false colors any more. From now on, whatever comes, you'll know why I'm here; and if it has to be war between you and Madison, you'll know where I stand."

"I hope you won't ever regret it." He sat down behind the desk. "Just now things look pretty dark, and it's no use denying that we may be beaten."

Standing beside his chair, she laid her hand on his shoulder. "You won't ever be beaten—you couldn't be beaten. I remember the night they took us captive, how you carried me for miles to the river. And I've listened to the tales Casey and the rest of them tell about you. Men like you can be killed, Cliff—they can't be beaten."

The low voice stopped, but he did not answer. Madison, Vicente, even the prospect of defeat had lost all importance, all reality. Nothing was important now except to know she believed in him, and was standing very close to him. Raising his head, he brushed her arm with his cheek, and felt the warm, living softness of her. She trembled; he heard the faint intake of her breath, and in that second he was on his feet, his arms about her.

"Janet!" The mass of coppery hair lifted as she drew back her head. Her eyes, luminous beneath the lamp, were on his eyes; her lips, half parted, rose nearer, almost touched—then suddenly her eyes changed, and she gasped: "Cliff! The window—someone's outside."

He jerked open the door, but the night lay black and empty, and at a run he rounded the building, then stood listening. "Were you sure?" he called.

"I saw a face pressed against the pane, and then it was gone. I remember the eyes staring—"

Janet stopped. The long-drawn howl of a jaguar came to them from the darkness.

"It's Plato," Cliff said, and the same thought flashed across the minds of both—had it been Lilli at the window?

But the spell of that moment was shattered, and Janet looked up at him with a tired smile.

"I'm dead, Cliff. Mind if I run along to bed? Too much has happened today."

"I know." He walked with her down the path to the door of her shack, then with both hands he raised her face and kissed her lips. "Remember this," he whispered. "We can't lose now—you and I."

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

UP in Claribel's office Madison sat white-faced and brooding. For nearly an hour after Janet left him he did not move, his slate-gray eyes fixed on the window. Then as if reaching a decision, he left the house and rode to the quarters of his vaqueros. The smoke-filled, barracks-like room was crowded with herdsmen. Madison beckoned to Sloan.

The burly leader swaggered over. "What goes, Boss?"

Madison said curtly: "Are these all the vaqueros you have here?"

"Sure. Some are at the river camp, but most of 'em are in the upper ranges. What do you want done that us boys can't handle?"

"I want you to crack down on Cliff Bogard."

"What's the sudden idea, Boss? I thought you was waitin' for the Blacklanders to tangle with him first."

"To hell with all that! I'm fed up, understand, fed up! Either he goes or I go, and this is as good a time as we'll ever have."

Sloan looked thoughtful. "If that's the job, I guess we'll need all the vaqueros we can round up."

"We'll need every man."

Sloan flicked his cigarette across the floor. "Okay. We'll start tomorrow."

Madison spat out an oath. "We'll start right now. It's going to take three or four days to bring them in from the upper ranges, even if we work fast, and I'm going with you. By midnight we can be at the river camp. By dawn we'll be in the upper range."

Sloan looked into Madison's face and reached for his spurs. "Whatever you say, Boss."

Skirting the village, the two men rode down the river trail, and an hour later they were passing Wade's clearing, where a light in the window of the main shack caught Madison's attention.

He reined in his horse. "I thought Wade and Lilli were living at the rubber camp."

"They were."

A shadow passed across the window, and Madison recognized Lilli. He leaned toward Sloan.

"I'd say she's alone. You stay out here and keep watch. I want a word or two with that lady."

DISMOUNTING, MADISON walked toward the shack. Twice he stopped to listen; then certain that no one else was inside, threw open the door. At the sound Lilli turned, and beneath the lamplight he saw she had been weeping.

Terrified, the girl drew back. "What do you want?"

He seated himself comfortably just inside the door. "I thought you were staying at the rubber camp."

So low he scarcely heard, she said: "I've left."

He looked at her with new interest. Yes, her cheeks were wet with tears. Had something really gone wrong at the camp, or was she lying? Was she here to bring some message from Bogard to Vicente?

"Lilli," he began easily, "people say you're a good friend of Vicente's."

She did not answer, and he went on, his voice almost affable. "Of course, there's no reason why you shouldn't be friends. For that matter, there's no real reason why Vicente and I shouldn't be friends—neither of us can gain anything by this eternal fighting." He waited, but could make nothing of her half-averted face. "Unless," he added casually, "he'd rather go on working with Bogard."

Still no sign—for all he could tell she might not even be listening; and feeling he had wasted time, he rose to his feet. "If you ever see Vicente, you tell him what I said. And tell him that another one of my vaqueros disappeared this morning. He probably knows all about that, but what he doesn't know is that tomorrow there'll be a reward offered for him dead or alive. That'll put some life in the soldiers."

At the word "soldiers," he saw her start. That at least had made an impression; and seizing his advantage, he hurried on: "If there's enough money in it for them, the soldiers will make it hot for your friend Vicente."

Eyes shadowed with fear, Lilli answered: "It's not Vicente's fault what happens. You know that. Vicente only does what his chief tells him."

"But Vicente will be the one to suffer. And if Bogard gets mixed up in it, he'll suffer too." Madison licked his lips. "Vicente and Bogard both—rotting out their days in the prison colony."

"*No!*" It was an involuntary cry of dread. She came toward him, her fear of him forgotten.

"If I told you who the real Blackland leader is—the one who makes Vicente do what he does—would you let Vicente and Cliff alone?"

Madison's head jerked. The leader! Here was something beyond his wildest hopes. He tried to speak calmly. "I promise."

"You won't do anything to Vicente?"

"No, I told you, no!" His voice was shrilling with impatience.

A silence that to Madison seemed eternity; then: "The Blackland leader is Miss Janet's father."

"You little fool!" He barked a laugh of savage disappointment. "Norman's been dead two years."

"He's not dead. He's alive. I saw him."

"You little babbling—" He stopped. She seemed so very sure, and within him stirred a memory of Norman's fierce championship of the Blacklands people. Another memory flashed in upon him—it had been Vicente who guided the searching-party to the Doctor's flooded camp. Yes, and the rise of the Blackland leader followed almost on the heels of Norman's disappearance. The thing was unbelievable, and yet—

He rose. "Where did you see Dr. Norman?"

She made a vague gesture toward the jungle.

"Where?" Seizing her by both shoulders, he shook her. Tears started from her eyes, but she would not speak, and with an effort he controlled himself.

"I'm sorry, Lilli. I won't ask you where you saw him. I don't care where you saw him; but just tell me this—are you certain, absolutely certain, it was Dr. Norman?"

"I'm certain."

A thrill of exultation swept him. The story could be true! That was why Janet had come back. And only a few hours ago she had called him a thief!

"Does Janet Norman know where her father is?" he demanded.

"I guess so."

"Then she can tell the soldiers all about it." He hurried out into the night and bellowed: "Sloan! You go ahead to the river camp. I'm riding over to the garrison."

"Look, Boss"—Sloan's voice grated in disgust—"you aint goin' to get us mixed up with the soldiers?"

"I've got a tale that will make them our friends for life." Madison stopped. "And I better take that brat along to vouch for it." He raced back to the shack, but at the door he began cursing. The room was empty.

IT WAS NEARLY DAWN when Cliff heard Lilli calling him from outside his door. At sight of her stricken face, he lifted her in his arms and carried her to a chair.

"What's wrong? Are you hurt?"

"The soldiers—" She was very close to exhaustion.

"What about the soldiers?"

Wordless, she clung to him like a frightened child; then at last: "They're coming for Miss Janet. It was my fault. Don't be mad at me."

He kneeled beside her while brokenly she told him the tale. "I saw you and Miss Janet through the window," she ended, and a sob shook her. "I was jealous, and I went back to the cabin to stay. I wanted never to come here again. Then when Madison said he was going for the soldiers, I ran all the way down to tell you. Please don't be mad."

"There isn't time to be mad."

Anything could happen if Janet fell into the soldiers' hands. Norman might give himself up, or worse still, attack the garrison and put himself for all time on the wrong side of the law. Or Cliff's own men might make some desperate attempt to rescue her. And even in that moment of crisis, Cliff felt a reluctant admiration for Madison's strategy in sending soldiers to take Janet instead of his vaqueros. Cliff might oppose the vaqueros, but he could not risk open conflict with the *Federalistas*.

He lifted Lilli from out the chair. "Go wake Janet," he ordered. "Have her put on her riding-things and meet me at the office. Make her hurry."

In the barn he saddled his two best horses, and leaving them hidden behind a bulldozer, ran back to the office. Janet and Lilli were already waiting, and he bundled Janet into her jacket.

"We've got to get away from here," he told her. "There's no time to explain why, but if you're caught, it means a smash-up."

"I'm ready." Her face was pale, but the low voice was steady, and he knew he could count on her.

Turning the lamp down to a mere speck of flame, he beckoned to Lilli. "When the soldiers come, keep them here. Tell them anything, but hold them as long as you can." His hand was on the knob. "Now—"

Quick as a cat, he flattened against the wall. Outside, a flashlight gleamed and heavy footsteps sounded on the path; then there came a sharp command in Spanish.

Violently Cliff pulled Janet from the door—the soldiers were already there.

A boot scraped on the steps, a heavy rap reverberated through the darkened room, and Cliff's hand closed about Janet's wrist. He hurried her across the floor to his instrument-locker.

"Get in!" he whispered.

HASTILY SHE STEPPED INSIDE, squeezing back among the levels and compass-staffs; and picking up his poncho, Cliff hung it in front of her. The folds completely covered her, and Cliff started to shut the locker, then thinking better of it, opened the door wide.

Once again, louder this time and more impatiently, came the rapping; then the knob turned, and searchlight in hand, the *sergente* stamped in.

At sight of that dreaded *Federalista* uniform, Lilli shrank back against Cliff; and throwing his arm about her, he drew the girl to him. It was thus the sergeant found them. Briefly the soldier's dark eyes dwelt on the two forms, standing so close together in the dimness, and his lips moved in a smile of understanding. He gave a short salute.

"Dispénseme, señor. One regrets this intrusion, but we are looking for Señorita Norman."

"Why look here?" Cliff's voice was sharp with simulated anger.

"We were told—"

The sergeant stopped, and Cliff felt his pulse skip a beat, for those dark eyes had come to rest on the locker. The soldier took a step forward, then apparently satisfied by the open door, turned to Cliff. "Where would Señorita Norman be?"

"She went to New Dixie early this evening."

"But she lives here, no?"

Cliff made a gesture toward the river. "She lives in the first building beyond the warehouse."

"Gracias." Again the sergeant's eyes paused in frank approbation on Lilli's face, and at sight of her burning cheeks, he raised both shoulders in an apologetic shrug. "I am desolate to disturb you at such a time." Nodding to Cliff, he left the office.

Within the room, no one stirred until the tramp of feet had died away; then Cliff heard Lilli give a sigh of relief. Hurrying to the locker, he pulled the poncho aside.

"Let's get out of this." He drew Janet, half suffocated, from her narrow hiding-place. Forcing himself to move deliberately, he opened the office door and peered up the path. As far as he could see, it lay empty; and taking Janet by the hand, he slipped out, closing the door behind him. The horses were standing where he had hidden them; and lifting Janet into the saddle, he mounted, then listened. No sound except the chorus of frogs from the river and the low roar of the rapids. Turning, he started up the path.

Black going. . . . For the first mile he expected at any moment to hear sounds of pursuit, but they reached the base of the foothills with no sign of the soldiers, and there Cliff gave the trail-wise horses their heads, urging them to a fast trot over the level stretches, stopping only to turn on the flashlight when the animals' hesitation told of a fork in the trail.

"Where are you taking me?" Janet asked him once, as they halted to let the horses rest.

"Big Swamp."

He had been dreading that question, and he knew his answer was evasive, but there wasn't time to talk. Even beyond the need for haste, there was nothing to gain by telling her now. She would know soon enough.

On through the moonless night he forced their flagging horses, while the furtive eyes of jungle creatures watched from beyond the path, and night birds cried in shrill protest at their passing.

Faint dawn was just touching the waters of Big Swamp when Cliff led Janet down the bank and out along the line of stunted mangroves toward the mist-shrouded island that for a time at least might have to be her home.

As they came nearer, Cliff's eyes searched each foot of the island, but there was neither sound nor motion; and soon they were climbing up from the swamp and over the flinty trail into the clearing. It lay quiet and empty. Too quiet. For a moment he wondered if the vaqueros or *Federalistas* had already found the place and were waiting for him to walk into their trap. In either case there was not time to go back now; and with no attempt at concealment, he rode across the clearing, then stopped in front of the low thatched dwelling where he had first met Dr. Norman.

Janet's eyes moved curiously about her, then rose to Cliff; and in them he read the inevitable question.

"Janet,"—he drew a long breath—"I brought you here because—"

She was not listening. Her whole body had stiffened; her eyes, wide with disbelief, were looking beyond him; and turning, Cliff saw Norman in the doorway. Still as a statue, Janet sat her horse; her hands tried to rise, then dropped in weakness at her side.

"Father!" Like a cry of anguish the one word broke the silence, and now her head sank forward, she swayed, and would have fallen from the saddle, but Norman caught the limp form in his arms.

Jumping from his horse, Cliff took a step after them, then stopped. Better to leave them together—there was so much for them to say to one another, so much in which he had no place. He watched Norman carry Janet inside the shack, then walked to the edge of the clearing, and for a time stood looking out across the waters of Big Swamp, shimmering in the sun. Behind him he heard the low whinny of his horse, and realizing that the two animals were wet and weary after their long climb, led them around to the back of the dwelling, and taking off their saddles, turned them loose to graze on the sparse grass of the clearing. Lighting a cigarette, he sat down in the shade of a palm.

The immediate danger of pursuit was behind him, but he knew that the real peril was still to be met: ahead of him lay the menace of Madison's jealousy, and that could not be avoided for long. Madison's vindictive nature would drive him to some swift act of vengeance.

DEEPLY SUNK IN HIS THOUGHTS, Cliff did not hear Janet until she stood by his side.

"You ran away from me," she said.

"You didn't really need me." He saw that her cheeks were wet, but her eyes were shining; and for the first time that day he smiled. "You're happy now, aren't you?"

"I think I'm too afraid to be happy. I keep telling myself that all this really happened—that he's alive and I'm here. But it's too—"

She stopped, and gently he said: "It's all really happened, Janet. Your father's alive."

"But what's ahead for him, Cliff? Will he always have to hide away like a hunted animal?"

"I don't know any more than you, darling. Hasn't he told you why he came here in the first place?"

"We hardly talked at all. I just held him—and cried. I know what they mean now when they talk of crying from happiness."

A footstep sounded on the path, and Norman came toward them. He was as visibly moved as Janet when he shook Cliff's hand.

"I told you once that Janet was not to know about me," he said, "but I was wrong. You were right to bring her here."

"I had to bring her," Cliff answered. "The soldiers—"

"Yes, I know about them. I have sent a man back to warn us if they find your trail. There is little chance of that, but a messenger is leaving to tell Vicente to gather our riders. In the meanwhile, there's something you both must know, and perhaps not much time to tell it in."

Chapter Nineteen

SEATING himself between them, Norman studied Cliff's face, and his gray eyes were smiling.

"One of the things I liked about you the first day we met was your bluntness," he began. "You told me I was a cold-blooded father to let Janet go on believing me dead. I want to tell you why I had no choice—I had to do it."

He laid his hand on Janet's and went on: "I suppose everyone thinks his own lifework is the most important thing in the world. I know I did. I came here over twenty years ago at Claribel's invitation, to stamp out malaria among the river people. There was scarcely a healthy man or woman in all the lower country those days; and at first it wasn't easy to help them. They were suspicious and unfriendly—they wanted to be left alone. It took years to get their confidence; but when I did, when they finally learned that my only purpose here was to help them, I found them the kindliest people in the world. They brought me their problems, they came to me for help in sorrow, until I was more a priest to them than a doctor.

"My main obstacle was Madison. He disliked me from the start; he resented Claribel's trust in me, and he had already begun his bullying tactics against the very people I was trying to bring health to.

"Two years ago, while Janet was in the States, I was treating a banana-planter's family for dengue fever, and on one of my visits I found three of Madison's vaqueros trying to force the family out of their home. They had already taken the father from his sickbed when I came in. We had hot words, and one of the vaqueros struck me."

Norman's eyes glowed. "I am quick-tempered, and my hands and arms are very strong. When they pulled me away from the man, he was unconscious—later he died. It was the first time anyone had dared oppose the vaqueros, and Madison was mad with rage. He demanded that Claribel send me out of the colony; but when I told her my story, she refused. She tried to bring about a reconciliation, but nothing could have been more hopeless. I think it was then Madison realized that I could be a real danger to him; and two days later Vicente learned that the vaqueros intended to kill me on my next trip to the jungle, and make it appear an act of the Blacklanders.

"Whether Madison planned this, I don't know; but my death would have served him in two ways: he would be rid of me once and for all, and the Blacklanders themselves would have to bear the blame."

Norman rose. "You make decisions quickly at times like that. There was no longer any safety for me here. My usefulness as Dr. Norman was over, and yet I knew that if I went away, I was abandoning twenty years of heartbreaking work—practically the labor of a lifetime—just as it reached the very threshold of success. What use was it to stamp out fever, or teach these people about nutrition and better living, only to leave them in slavery under Madison's cattlemen? I resolved then and there to show the Blacklanders how to defend themselves, if it took the rest of my life. Their one hope lay in organizing. They needed a leader, and I determined to be that leader. I called in Vicente and three other men I could trust, and we held a council of war. It was the start of the rainy season, and we decided I should be reported as drowned."

For the first time Janet spoke. "And you let me go on believing that?"

Norman's eyes softened. "Darling, don't you see I had to? Nothing on earth would have kept you from coming to me. You would have had to live the life of an outlaw, for that is what I became, once they put a price on my head. I love you more than anyone in the world; I couldn't face subjecting you to the life of a hunted animal."

He turned to Cliff again. "For two years I have lived here in this island hide-away. Gradually, with Vicente and the other leaders, I have awakened in these Blackland people the will and power to resist Madison's vaqueros. We move slowly, but we do move; and little by little we have banded together men with courage. We are beginning to strike back; each time a vaquero commits an act of violence, he becomes a marked man; we hunt him down and bring him to this island. We are giving Madison's bullies something to fear, and we are giving our people something to hope for."

"But," Cliff asked, "why didn't you bring Madison himself here and put an end to all of it?"

"We talked of that many times. The trouble was that as long as Claribel believed in Madison, it would have turned her against the Blacklanders forever. Sloan or a dozen others could have taken his place. No, our best course lay in making it unsafe for the petty tyrants, while we built up our own strength for the day we might risk an open battle."

In voice and manner, in everything Norman said, the deep humanity of the grizzly-haired man was inescapable. He might be of the visionary stuff that made martyrs; but if he failed, he would certainly go down fighting.

"You said you sent Vicente to bring in your riders. Are you going to attack the soldiers?" he asked.

"Not unless they find out about this island."

"But if there's danger of discovery, wouldn't it be better to leave? Once you collide with the soldiers, Madison will have you where he wants you—on the wrong side of the law."

"I know that," Norman replied. "What other way is there?"

Cliff had no answer; he saw, as Norman saw, that a clash with the soldiers must mean the ultimate defeat of the Blacklanders' cause, but once they made Lilli tell what she knew, there could be no hope of avoiding it.

JANET WAS FIRST to offer a solution. "There might be a way, Father," she said slowly. "Claribel always trusted you. If you tell her everything and make her see just what is going on, she would have to believe you."

Norman shook his head. "She didn't believe me two years ago. Why should she now?"

"Because so much more has happened. The vaqueros have grown bolder in those two years. Wade has told me some of the things they do, and there must be other people with the courage to tell Claribel the truth if she could be made to listen."

"She might listen—or she might not," Norman answered. "It depends on how well Madison has blinded her. And besides, how would I get to her?"

"You mustn't even try," Janet answered quickly. "Let me bring her to you."

But here Cliff objected. "That won't do, either. You're no safer on the trail today than your father. If anybody is to bring Claribel here, it's me. And that isn't going to be easy. She hasn't stirred out of her house for two years."

Norman was openly doubtful. "It's a long chance," he admitted. "But it may be our only hope of settling this thing without bloodshed. So if you want to try it, I'll have a fresh horse saddled for you."

"I'll try it," Cliff answered, and Norman walked back toward the corral.

Janet's eyes followed him, then looked up into Cliff's. "I told him about us," she said. "He likes you."

Cliff smiled. "Did he say you were crazy to love a man who is well on the way to losing his shirt?"

"Is it really that bad, Cliff?"

Reaching over, he took both her hands. "Janet, after last night, I honestly don't know whether I have a Chinaman's chance. If the soldiers or the vaqueros delay us now, we're sunk; but if we can get Claribel to call off Madison, I may pull through. Otherwise, you're going to find yourself in love with a pauper."

She raised her hands to his cheeks. "I'm in love with you. What does anything else matter?"

TWO HOURS LATER, from behind her desk in the high-ceilinged office, Claribel glared up at Cliff. "And how do I know you're not lying?" she demanded.

"You can test that by coming with me."

"The whole thing is crazy. If Bob Norman's alive, why doesn't he come here himself instead of sending you?"

"I've told you twice. The soldiers are looking for him, and probably by now your precious nephew's vaqueros have joined in the hunt. If you don't want hell to break loose, there isn't much time to waste. You're the only one can stop it, and all I'm asking you to do is take a horseback ride."

"In this blazing sun?" Claribel glared toward the shuttered window. "I have a headache right now. If—"

Cliff's patience evaporated. "Why don't you stop kidding yourself?" he growled in a voice that made her blink. "Those headaches of yours are just a flimsy excuse to avoid responsibility. You've let Madison talk you into believing you're an invalid, until you've lost complete touch with everything. You didn't have headaches when Bob Norman was here, and I've noticed you don't have them when you're winning at bridge. You're not old enough yet to sit around waiting to die, but that's exactly what you're doing, and it's because you haven't courage to face an unpleasant truth."

"You impudent—" She stopped, and slowly her shoulders squared. Rising to her feet, she pulled from the desk drawer a pair of sun-glasses. "I can face anything that a brazen fly-by-night beachcomber like you can show me! Get one of the yard-boys to saddle my horse."

It turned out to be slow going, for Claribel had not been in the saddle for over two years, and it was mid-afternoon when Cliff guided her through the waters of Big Swamp and up to Norman's secret home.

Cliff did not witness the meeting of those old friends. He helped Claribel dismount, led her to the door, and watched her pass inside, then sat down with Janet to wait. There was nothing more he could do. . . .

It must have been a stormy interview. For well over an hour the sound of their voices drifted out to Cliff, sometimes so low he could scarcely hear the murmur, sometimes swelling angrily, and he remembered the tales of Norman's explosive temper—Claribel's he knew from actual experience. Then, so loud that Janet jumped, Claribel broke out wrathfully: "Why couldn't you have told me what was going on from the very beginning, instead of starting this insane business?"

"You wouldn't have believed me," Norman's voice answered. "I had no proof, and with the vaqueros after me, I had no time to get proof. You've always been a doting aunt where Madison is concerned, Claribel. You were never willing to believe anything to his discredit. You don't entirely believe me now."

The voices fell again, and Janet whispered to Cliff: "It's bitter as death for her to listen to anything against Madison. I'm not sure even Father can convince her."

And when at last the matriarch came out, it was clear she hadn't been wholly convinced; but in spite of herself her manner showed that at least she had been shaken. Belligerently she approached Cliff. "Young man," she ordered, "you may take me back home." With his help she pulled herself into the saddle. "I want to find out if things are going to pot as badly as everybody around here seems to think."

Smiling, Norman came to her side. "Whether you believe me or not, Claribel, won't you say you're glad to see me again?"

She gave that low chuckle of hers, and the wrinkled hand dropped to his shoulder. "Of course I'm glad, Bob. There wasn't anybody worth fighting with after you left." Then, she barked at Cliff: "Well, what are we waiting for?"

They made the return journey almost in complete silence, for Cliff could sense the conflict in Claribel's mind too clearly to interrupt her. Only once, as they rode straight into the glare of the westering sun, he could not resist asking: "How's the headache?"

"What about the headache?"

"I notice you've been wearing those sun-glasses in your pocket all afternoon," he answered. "You must be in severe pain by now."

"There are times when your humor is harder to bear than your bridge," she snapped; but after a moment she said, in a lower tone: "I don't like to think I'm a fool, and I'm not going to think it until I have to. If things are as Bob Norman says, there's going to be a sudden change. Meanwhile, you go ahead and get out your blasted rubber—Madison or nobody else is going to bother you. I can promise you that."

It was a promise Cliff felt he could take at its face value, and he went back to camp with redoubled zeal.

His enthusiasm was contagious. The men quickened their tempo and lengthened their hours, until up on the edge of the plantations piles of rubber rose high.

IT WAS NONE TOO SOON. Three days after Cliff's ride with Claribel, he laid a radiogram on Casey's desk—the cargo ship would be at the dock in less than a week to load the rubber.

Casey rubbed his hands. "And Boss, this time we'll have it for 'em."

Cliff looked at the calendar. "We'd better."

True to her promise, meanwhile, Claribel lost no time putting Norman's story to the test, and she shouldered with characteristic thoroughness the task of discovering what actually went on in New Dixie.

She was fortunate from the very first. Madison was still in the upper ranges; and unhampered by his presence, she summoned a dozen men whose word she could trust—Wade Carroll among them—and bullied them into giving her a full report of conditions as they saw them. It wasn't a reassuring picture, but not yet satisfied, she pulled her protesting body into the saddle and with Wade as guide, rode the river trails, seeing with her own eyes the abandoned dwellings that had once been homes of the valley people, and with her own ears heard tales of the vaqueros' growing oppression. At the end of the third day, she sat at her desk for a full hour, frowning

into space, then sent a vaquero to bring Madison back to New Dixie.

Hours later he arrived with Sloan, angry and curious at the abruptness of her summons. Outside the gate he threw the reins of his horse to Sloan.

"Wait here," he ordered. "It won't take me long to find out what the old fool wants." He stamped into Claribel's office.

She began calmly enough. "What have you been doing in the upper ranges, Madison?"

"Gathering my vaqueros."

"What for?"

His mouth twitched. "For protection—yours and mine. This may come as an unpleasant surprise to you, but your old and trusted friend Bob Norman isn't as dead as you thought he was. He happens to be the Blackland leader. For two years he's been organizing every squatter in the Blacklands against you, and they're getting ready to strike. Janet was probably a go-between, letting him know just how things stood here. And that isn't all. Norman and Cliff Bogard are working together—we'll be in a nice spot if they both decide to jump us. Does that answer your question why I'm gathering the vaqueros?"

In his vehemence Madison had leaned toward her, and Claribel caught the smell of whisky on his breath.

"Madison," she said, "I can tell by your eyes that you're lying. Your trouble is you're jealous of Cliff—jealous because of Janet."

In rising anger he shouted: "Forget about—"

"Wait." With an upraised hand she silenced him. "Suppose this time you let me do the talking. I've let you do it for the past two years. And maybe I better remind you that if Cliff Bogard is a menace, it was you who asked me to keep him here. I didn't want him to come in the first place. I didn't want Janet, either. I knew there'd be trouble, and there has been. But you wanted it, and I let you have your way. You've had your way quite a lot, Madison. And I'll say this in justice to Cliff Bogard—he has lived up to everything he said. I don't think you have."

"What do you mean?"

"I've been talking to people and riding around the country the last three days, Madison. I don't like the things I saw; I'm not blaming you, because the fault's really mine. But from now on, things are going to be different. We're going to find a better way of treating the Blacklanders than driving them from their homes with the help of my vaqueros."

"*Your* vaqueros!" He checked himself; then with an effort to be calm he asked: "Who do you think has really run New Dixie for the past two years? I have—and I haven't used gloves. If you do anything to break the power of my vaqueros, there'll be no safety for you or anyone else in New Dixie."

"I disagree with you. New Dixie got along without terrorism before, and it can get along again. I'm going to have all that brutal nonsense stopped, and at once."

He laughed. "Then you're taking on quite a job. How are you going to stop the soldiers from hunting down Bob Norman?"

"By withdrawing the reward for him. I did that yesterday, and it's surprising how completely they lost interest."

Pale with anger that was rapidly getting the upper hand, Madison flared back: "And what about the vaqueros he and Vicente killed?"

"Not one of them has ever been killed. And nobody's going to be killed, if I can help it. But here's something you may have to get used to. From now on, your job will be in the upper ranges. There's plenty to do up there. In the future I'll handle everything connected with the Blacklanders. And I've already promised Cliff Bogard there will be no interference with his work at the plantations."

"*You* promised!" Faced with the intolerable thought of being stripped of his power, the bonds of Madison's self-control snapped like rotten threads. "You doddering fool!" With both fists he beat down on the desk. "Just how much do you think any promise of yours is worth?" Rage and whisky had lashed him into open rebellion at last. He thrust his face close to hers. "You're just a figurehead here, and you're too dumb to realize it. The only power in New Dixie is the vaqueros—and they're mine, and by God, they'll stay mine! For the last two years everyone in New Dixie has taken orders from me. I've been the real boss here—not you. Everybody knows you're sick and old. You're through, and just as long as you don't interfere with me, things can go on as before. But if you take one step against me, I'll show you how little you really count."

She half rose, then slowly she sank back; and for the first time in his life Madison Florian saw fear in the woman's eyes. Savagely he tasted the sweetness of his triumph after those years of outward submission; then again he spoke.

"Now you listen to me: I'm going to run Cliff Bogard out of New Dixie. You wouldn't let me cancel his contract, so I'm taking a more direct way of getting rid of him." Madison raised a warning hand. "And don't you try to help him."

She stared up at him. "I forbid it," she said, but her voice trembled.

"You forbid it!" He laughed in her face, and slammed the door behind him.

For a long time she sat drinking the bitter dregs of thoughts that told her all this was the fruit of her own infatuation. In her lonely life, he had been the one person she really loved. She had raised him. All her dreams had been for him. . . .

Outside Madison had mounted. "That old fool may give us trouble," he told Sloan. "I'm going to smash Bogard before she can interfere, so the sooner we hold our surprise party, the better. I want you to have every vaquero ready to start by daybreak."

"Start for where?"

"Cliff Bogard's headquarters." Madison grinned at a sudden recollection. "Tomorrow ought to be a good day to wipe that camp out. It'll be just six months since he came here to build it."

Chapter Twenty

Cliff remembered it too that next morning, as he rode along the trail—exactly six months to the day since he had flown up the river with Janet. They had spent most of the flight quarreling, and now he was whistling because a messenger had just come from her, saying she would be down at headquarters camp that evening. He hadn't seen her since he left the island with Claribel; the fact that she was venturing out of Norman's hiding-place might mean danger was over.

There were other reasons to make Cliff whistle that sunny morning. He had spent the night at the plantation, and everything was going better than he could have hoped. Tons of rubber, well smoked and piled on the river-banks, were ready for loading, and tomorrow the barges would be towed up over the rapids to bring it to the docks.

Still whistling, he rode through the gates of his camp, then abruptly he stopped and looked curiously about him. Not a sound, not a movement. The place was silent and empty, and for a moment the chill of fear assailed him, then with a feeling of relief he saw Lilli standing outside Plato's cage.

"Where's everybody?" he called. ""Where's Casey?"

She came running toward him. "Didn't you send word for all the men to go to the plantations?

He shook his head. "Who told you that?"

"A man rode in."

"One of my men?"

"No. But he said you'd sent him. Said you wanted everybody right away. Casey took them all up in boats. He thought something was wrong."

"Something *is* wrong." Cliff gave a look at the empty, unguarded camp, and knew there could be only one reason for getting the men away—an attack.

"Lilli,"—he grasped the girl's arm,—"take my launch and catch Casey. Tell him to bring the men back here, and bring them fast."

Bewildered, she asked: "But what's it mean?"

"It means Madison is on the loose at last."

He helped her into the launch, started the motor, and thrust the bow out into the stream; then as the sound of the exhaust died away, turned back toward the office alone. No use to bar the gate—he could not hope to hold the camp against the vaqueros. Better to act as if Madison's coming was a complete surprise, and if he could, gain time.

SLOWLY CLIFF WALKED up the path past the long line of barges moored on both sides of the dock, past the empty bunkhouses and the little power plant. They had never seemed so still. So quiet it was, he heard the soft pad-pad of Lilli's jaguar, pacing eternally in its narrow cage.

For the tenth time he looked at his watch. Lilli had been gone twenty minutes. If she could catch his men at the forks, they might be back in less than an hour—better than that he could not even hope. He made another tour of the deserted camp, threading his way among the piles of equipment, drums of oil and gasoline, bulldozers and dredges—everything he had in the world, and all utterly defenseless except for the barbed-wire fence and the gate he had chosen to leave open.

Once again he pulled out his watch—time was standing still. Forcing himself to be calm, he walked down toward the dock; then with a start he froze. Up on the high bank across the river, where in earlier days he had first seen Norman, a rider was sitting his horse, and for an instant Cliff thought he was one of Madison's vaqueros. But the man wore the dark, broad-brimmed sombrero of Vicente's riders; and although he saw Cliff's eyes on him, he made no effort at concealment, but sat in full view, and to Cliff's surprise, raised his hand in silent greeting.

But now the horseman was forgotten. From far up the trail Cliff heard the muffled pounding of horses' hoofs, and he knew the vaqueros were close at hand. In a last hope he scanned the river for some sign of Casey, but the surface stretched empty of life as far as he could see.

Not long to wait. A thunder of hoofbeats, a shout, and with Madison at their head, the vaqueros crowded through the gates, a hundred and fifty strong, swarming into the enclosure, their horses' withers white with foam, the yellow dust rising in a great cloud behind them. As the last man clattered inside the camp, Sloan dismounted and closed the gates.

Still astride his horse, Madison looked about him, then catching sight of Cliff idly standing, hands in his pockets, before the office door, he laughed and rode up to him.

"Where's Janet?" he asked.

"She's not here."

"Too bad. I wanted her to see this." Madison threw one leg over the saddlehorn and settled himself comfortably. "I suppose you haven't the least idea what I came here for?"

His intent was clear enough, but to gain time Cliff asked: "How should I?"

"I'll tell you." Madison's arm swept in a half circle. "See this camp? It took you a good many days to build it. In less than one hour I'm going to level it to the ground while you look on."

He stopped and peered eagerly down into Cliff's face, to find some sign of weakness or of pain. But the tanned face was like stone, and the slow voice asked quietly: "Why are you doing this, Madison?"

"Why?" The hand holding the reins began trembling. "Because I hate you more than any man that ever lived."

"I know you do. But why?"

"You took Janet away from me; you turned Claribel against me." Madison licked his lips. "I could have had you killed—that would have been easy; but it wasn't what I wanted. I want you to go on living after you've seen everything you worked for wrecked before your eyes. I'm going to send you out of here a beggar; and if Janet wants you then, she can have you—but I don't think she will."

He was panting with a fury that shook his diminutive body; and now he called to Sloan: "Tie him up!"

Useless to resist. Cliff stood motionless as both hands were fastened behind him, and his feet lashed tight together with a heavy rope, while Madison watched, his hands quivering with the joy of it. But not until Cliff was securely bound did Madison dismount and venture closer. For a full minute he stood looking up, his narrow eyes drinking in the spectacle of his victim's utter helplessness; then he drew back his hand and struck Cliff full in the face. The impact of that vicious blow threw Cliff backward, and he fell flat.

Madison glared down at him. "You breed of big, lumbering men—" His face was wet with sweat. Turning, he shouted to his vaqueros: "You know your job. Burn everything that will burn, and what won't burn, throw in the river. Now get going!"

At his words, men hurried to the warehouse, and from where he lay Cliff saw them rolling out dozens of drums of oil. Again they went back, returning this time with tins of gasoline, and began soaking the buildings, the office, the thatched barns. Once he heard the crash of glass, and knew they were wrecking the power-house.

Soon a group of them, led by Sloan, made their way toward the dock, carrying cases of dynamite, and Cliff felt the icy grip of fear. If they blew up his barges, he was finished—without them, he could never bring the rubber down over the rapids to the cargo ship. Even if the rest of the camp was wrecked, he had a fighting chance to deliver the rubber, but without the barges—

He tried to sit up, but his bonds held him helpless. Raising his head, he could barely see Madison and Sloan heading for the dock. They were after the barges. . . . And in helpless agony his fettered hands beat the earth.

THEN FAINTLY HE HEARD a low buzz of motors from the river; and he knew that Casey and his men were coming at last. But the vaqueros had heard it too. Shouting a warning, they began racing down to the stream bank, and a moment later he heard the impact of their clash.

Only a confused roar at first. Painfully Cliff pulled himself to his elbow, just as a second boat, jammed with his men, reached the dock. Casey, in the bow, brandished a heavy spade; and even before the boat touched the dock, he leaped, and with one sweep of his weapon, sent three vaqueros sprawling into the river. By now Cliff's men had clambered from the launch, joining Casey, until the dock seethed with a mass of fighting, snarling men that surged back and forth as the tide of battle raged.

Both sides were fighting savagely, knowing that no quarter would be asked or given—the vaqueros armed with squat, wicked brush knives, Casey's men with any weapon they could find. Men fell and were trampled underfoot; others surged to take their place; and from where Cliff lay, he could hear the thud of steel on flesh, the cries of the wounded, while the river beneath the dock was churned to a muddy foam by men who had been swept over the edge.

A third boat reached the dock, reinforcing Casey's hard-pushed crew; and steadily, doggedly, they fought their way forward; but now the vaqueros were streaming out from the power-house, striking with the full weight of their numbers. Slowly the rubber men gave ground—step by bloody step the vaqueros were beating them back. Against that horde Cliff's men had no chance; he could only lie powerless while they went down fighting for him.

Choked with dust, he tugged at the rope with all his strength, but it did not budge, and he fell back gasping. Then, behind him, he heard a light footstep, and Lilli was kneeling at his side.

"Cliff, are you hurt?" Her wet hair brushed his cheek, and he knew she had swum in from the boat.

He almost shouted: "Get my hands loose—quick!"

She jerked desperately at his bonds, her very haste impeding her, and she had barely loosened the first knot when an angry oath sounded behind them—Madison was running up the path.

CLIFF'S WARNING CRY came too late. Already Madison was on them, and white with rage, he raised his quirt and struck Lilli to the ground. Moaning, she tried to rise, but he stood astride her, raining down blow after blow, while helplessly she crouched, trying to protect her face and head with her arms.

Heedless of his own pain, Cliff fought with red fury at the rope, but the wire-like strands only cut deeper into his wrists. He tried to pull himself to his knees, but Madison kicked him to the dust. Again he saw Madison turn with upraised quirt on Lilli; then high above the sound of battle he heard the savage roar of Plato.

Plato! Fired with sudden hope, Cliff lifted his head, and now he began rolling over and over toward the cage, until he lay directly beneath the bars that held the raging jaguar. Bracing himself, Cliff raised both feet until he lay supported by his shoulders and neck; then with all his might he kicked upward against the latch that fastened the cage door. It moved! Once again he kicked, and this time it clattered to the ground. Slowly the door swung open, and in that second Lilli screamed.

A single scream, then silence. But Plato had heard. One leap, and the huge cat left the cage. Tail lashing the ground, it stood for a heartbeat, green eyes fixed on Madison, then gathering itself, sprang.

A snarl, the rip of flesh, a piercing shriek of agony, and beneath that raging weight of fang and claw and sinew, Madison went down. Weakly Lilli staggered to her feet and tried to pull the jaguar back. For a moment she stood white-faced and shaken, looking at that prostrate, broken body, then reaching forward, she drew the knife from Madison's belt and cut Cliff's bonds.

He tried to stand, but could only crouch until the blood returned to his numb ankles, while down by the river he heard the triumphant vaqueros driving the last of his outnumbered men back over the dock into the boats again. Painfully he straightened; his fingers closed about the hilt of Madison's knife, and he took a single step toward the dock. Then Lilli grasped his arm.

"Cliff! Look!" She was pointing at the gate.

Beyond the fence, horsemen were pouring out of the jungle at a wild gallop, and a second later the gate shook with the impact of their rush. Cliff shouted aloud, every nerve tingling—it was the Blacklanders!

Tight-mouthed, streaked with dust and sweat, they tore across the clearing, shoulder to shoulder, their horses white with foam. A second wave of riders struck the gate; the stout hinges burst, and the gate crashed inward—Vicente at their head, the Blacklanders swept through the camp on their last ride of vengeance.

Knives in hand, they were out of the saddle before Madison's vaqueros knew what had happened, and down by the dock they struck. Silent as death, they closed; not a voice was raised, not a shout, but they moved with the deadly certainty of hunting dogs, and where they went, men fell. Savagely, methodically, the Blacklanders were settling up old scores; while Vicente, terrible to watch, strode among them like an avenging giant. Once Cliff saw him lift two squirming vaqueros in his hands and hurl them backward into the river.

By now Casey's men had seen the Blacklanders. Dripping wet and black with jungle mud, they came climbing back on the dock, seizing any missile they could find, eager to join battle again. Casey was flailing his spade about him with a grin of pure joy; and to the right Wing Toy, the cook, armed with his shining cleaver, had driven three vaqueros to the shelter of the corral. Caught up in a group of Blacklanders, Cliff pressed forward, knife in hand.

Wedged in between two enemies, the vaqueros turned at bay. Up past the office and back toward Plato's cage the battle surged, leaving the ground dotted with stricken vaqueros. It was no longer a battle; it was a rout, Blacklanders and rubber men uniting to drive Madison's men from the camp. Barely a fourth of them reached their horses. The rest lay sprawled and motionless between the river and the gate, or, cowering back, begged for the mercy they themselves had never shown.

Suddenly it was over. The fighting and the tramp of feet had ceased. Cliff saw Vicente walk by, carrying Lilli in his arms; on every side he heard the cheering of his men, and he knew the vaqueros' power had been broken.

Happily Casey wiped the sweat from his face. "That just about cooks it, Boss. No vaquero will ever—"

He stopped short. From the river rumbled the heavy roar of dynamite, followed in quick succession by a dozen lesser blasts, and the sky above the dock was crowded with broken beams and splintered wood that hurtled upward and fell back with a splash.

On a dead run, the two men raced down the path, but at the dock they stopped, and Cliff felt the blood drain from his heart—every one of his barges had been blown to bits.

Eyes fixed in disbelief, he stood scarcely breathing, while the excitement of battle, the exultation of victory died away. There was no victory now. Without those barges they were done; the rubber that lay piled for shipment ten miles beyond the rapids might just as well be beyond the moon.

AS IF IN A TRANCE, Cliff heard Casey cursing; then at the river's edge a form moved, and he saw Sloan bending over a fuse that led to the dock itself.

Fighting his way through the undergrowth, Cliff leaped down the bank, Casey at his heels, but Sloan had heard them. He stooped, touched a match to the fuse, then crouched, waiting.

"Watch it, Boss!" Casey yelled a shrill warning. "Watch it! He's got a knife!"

Too late. A gleam of steel as Sloan hurled the weapon, and Cliff felt the sharp stab of pain in his side. He took a short step forward, but Casey had passed him. The heavy shovel whirled in a half-arc, crashed down on Sloan's skull, and the vaquero crumpled like a stricken ox.

"That'll do for him and his knife-throwin'," Casey growled.

Cliff jerked the fuse loose and dropped it in the river. The burning end went out with a faint hiss, but still Cliff stood there, looking down on the shattered barges that marked the wreckage of his hopes.

Somberly Casey murmured: "I guess there's nothin' we can do now."

A mirthless smile touched Cliff's lips. "Yes, there's one thing—you can radio the cargo ship not to come. We're washed up." He staggered, and Casey jumped to his side.

"Boss, you're hurt!" Dropping his shovel, he lifted Cliff in his arms. . . .

It was dark when Janet and her father reached Cliff's camp, where Dr. Norman removed Casey's rough dressing and replaced it with clean bandages.

"You'll do," he told Cliff. "You were lucky that knife didn't nick your kidney." From the camp medicine-chest he took out a bottle. "One of these tablets will guarantee you a good night's sleep."

"Can I get up tomorrow?" Cliff asked.

"Don't be a damn' fool. That knife wound could be serious. You're better off in bed."

"There's a lot to do," Cliff objected.

"Then let someone else do it—you're not the only man in camp."

But just before Cliff fell asleep, he called for Janet. "You know about the barges?" he whispered.

Compassionately she nodded. "Casey told me."

"You really are in love with a pauper now."

She laid a cool hand on his forehead. "Don't worry, darling."

He tried to smile. "That's so easy to say, and so hard to—" He was asleep.

And during those next three days he spoke little of his disaster, but something had gone out of him—there was a muted quality about him that wrung Janet's heart.

He gained strength rapidly, but the buoyancy that had been so much a part of him did not return. Yet only once, as Casey sat by his bedside, did Cliff voice regret.

"We should have built that road around the rapids," he said, "and hauled the rubber down in trucks."

Casey grunted. "Forget it, Boss. We couldn't afford to build a road or buy enough trucks. And it aint like we don't know what it is to go broke."

"I went over the ledger this morning," he told Casey. "There's just enough money to pay off the boys and get them back to the States." He winced. "Maybe some day we'll all get together again on another job—one that we'll really put across."

"Sure, sure," Casey answered, but his eyes would not meet Cliff's.

ON THE EVENING of the second day Wade Carroll dropped in. The little hunter seemed saddened. "Lilli asked to be remembered," he said after a time.

"Why didn't you bring her along?"

Wade squirmed in his chair. "Well, Mr. Bogard, that's just it. She aint with me any more. She and Vin had a big fight; then they made it up, and Vicente took her back to stay with his people." He sighed. "It's kind of discouragin'. I wanted her to have a fine education."

"She'll be happier this way; education isn't everything."

"I guess not. Now take Madison—education never done him much good."

Cliff turned in his cot. "What about Madison?"

"They sent him to the hospital on the coast. I hear he won't never walk much again. And one thing's sure—he won't come back. Vicente says if he ever sees him, he'll break him in two. And Vin's the boy could do it."

That night Dr. Norman let Cliff walk about the shack. But only for a few moments, despite Cliff's insistence that he was feeling perfectly fit.

"You're the kind of patient no doctor should be cursed with," Norman stormed. "Besides, you better get all the rest you can. Claribel's coming to see you tomorrow."

"Then that settles it," Cliff answered. "Tomorrow I'm getting up. Claribel's tough enough when you're on your own two feet—I'm not going to let her catch me flat on my back." He frowned down at the ledger book he had thrown in the corner. "I suppose she's worried about her payments. If the old girl can find any loose money after I pay off the men, she's welcome to it—and I'll help her hunt."

The "old girl" came riding up to the shack just after Janet had brought Cliff his breakfast, and Cliff walked to the doorway to greet her. She peered down at him for a full minute, then grinned. "Well, I can't say you look much the worse for wear."

"Maybe you don't see very well without your sunglasses."

She laughed. "You know what happened to those sunglasses? Bob Norman broke 'em. He said—" She grasped the horn of her saddle in alarm, for her horse had wheeled and stood facing downstream. "What's wrong with this fool animal?" she burst out.

But in the next second they all saw—it was the bow of a steamer coming around the bend.

CLIFF COULD ONLY STARE. Mast and derricks gleaming in the morning sun, it rounded the turn, and now the valley shook with the piercing blast of its siren.

His uncomprehending gaze turned to Janet. "I asked Casey to radio that the boat wasn't needed," he managed to say.

"I told him not to, Cliff."

"But—"

Something in her eyes stopped him. "Cliff," she said, "come with me."

She led him slowly up the path that overlooked the rapids. Halfway across the clearing Cliff halted, and in silent amazement gazed down at the dock. The whole river-bank was heaped with piles of rubber, and crowds of men were stacking higher and higher still more piles of the great glistening brown balls. The dock, the camp, the trail to the rapids, swarmed with men carrying rubber on their shoulders or leading heavily laden mules.

As one walking in a dream, Cliff reached the low rise above the river. There, far as the eye could reach, the path that skirted the rapids was teeming with men, packhorses and mules, an army of workers, steadily adding to the tons of rubber already piled along the bank. More like ants than human figures they seemed, as they trudged toward the dock, but among them Cliff recognized some of his own men; others, from their garb, were Blacklanders, but most of them were people he had never seen before.

For a second Cliff's world swam. Beneath his unbelieving eyes the miracle had happened—his rubber was coming down to meet the cargo ship!

Claribel climbed gingerly from her horse. "Shows what us women can do when we get an idea," she announced belligerently. "Those men have been working night and day ever since you were hurt."

"But who are they?"

"Bob Norman and Vicente brought in every Blackland family for twenty miles around, and I sent all the men from New Dixie. The whole valley is working for you, young man, and by noon the last *bolacha* of your blasted rubber will be at the dock."

He made as if to speak, but she interrupted. "And don't thank me—thank Janet. She bulldozed Bob and me into turning the country upside down just so you could be happy. It was her idea."

Janet's idea! With shining eyes he looked at her. "What shall I say?" he half whispered. "What *can* I say?"

She tried to frown, but her voice was tremulous with happiness. "You might take back what you once said to me."

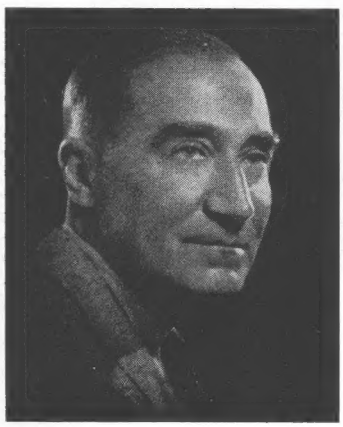
Puzzled, he looked at her, then suddenly remembering, "You mean that this was no place for women?"

"I mean something even worse." Janet turned to Claribel. "The very first day I met this person, he told me women were good for just one thing—having babies."

Claribel gave her deep, throaty chuckle. "Well, if you can manage babies the way you do his business, he better get going and—"

But the rest was an unrecognizable mumble, for Janet's hand had sealed the old lady's lips.

Who's Who *in this* Issue



Tom Gill

TOM GILL has spent many years in the tropical countries he writes about. As a forester, he lived in South and Central America, and made the first airplane survey of mahogany forests in Mexico. He has been shipwrecked on the Orinoco, and explored jungles never before penetrated by white men. The little colony of Americans described in this latest Tom Gill story exists in actual fact; and Tom Gill lived there some years ago.

Gathering material for his stories, he has traveled from north of Hudson's Bay to south of the Equator. He has used every means of transportation, from airplanes and *cayucas* to dog-sleds and Haitian mules.

Lt. Elihu Robinson

Lt. Comdr. Richard McShane Kelly, U.S.N.R.

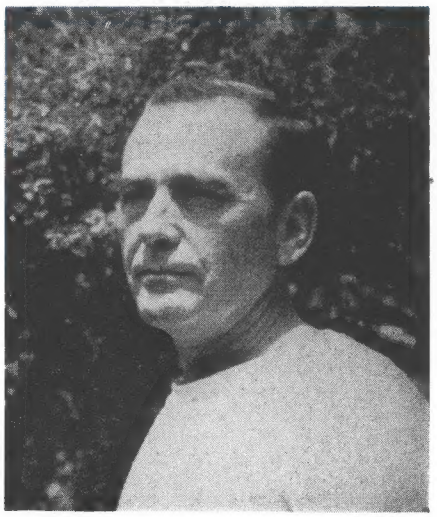
BORN Boston, Massachusetts, 2/22/16.

Graduated Boston College 1937. Hearst Newspapers in Boston—1934-1937. *Advertising Almanac*—Editor, 1937. . . . Stern Brothers Department Store, 1937-1941. . . . Ass't Buyer,

Ass't Advertising Manager. . . . Commissioned Ensign U. S. Naval Reserve, Oct. 1, 1941. Naval Public Relations, two years; Incentive Division, eight months; Office of Strategic Services twenty-two months.

Italian theater, May 1944 to May 1945. Commanded Maritime Detachment, OSS, Italian theater . . . Unit consisted of Italian San Marco Marines with American and Italian officers. Conducted seventy-nine operations behind enemy lines in support of British 8th Army and Royal Navy. Sabotage, intelligence and partisan supply missions.

Awarded Bronze Star, and Military Division of Order of British of Empire. Also American defense ribbon, American theater ribbon, Victory Ribbon and European-African theater ribbon with three battle stars.



Gilbert Wright

BORN in Pittsburgh, Kansas, 1901. Came to California in 1904 under the supervision of parents, Mr. and Mrs. Harold Bell Wright. Lived mostly in the deserts—Imperial Valley and in Arizona. Graduated as a Physics major in 1925 from U.C.L.A. Taught school for a year and thereafter got by as a short-story and picture writer. Took a couple of years off to invent a gadget that makes sound talk—Sonovox. Like to make archery tackle and hunt with a bow. Also like any kind of fishing and almost anything else that cannot be done in a city.

Lt. Elihu Robinson

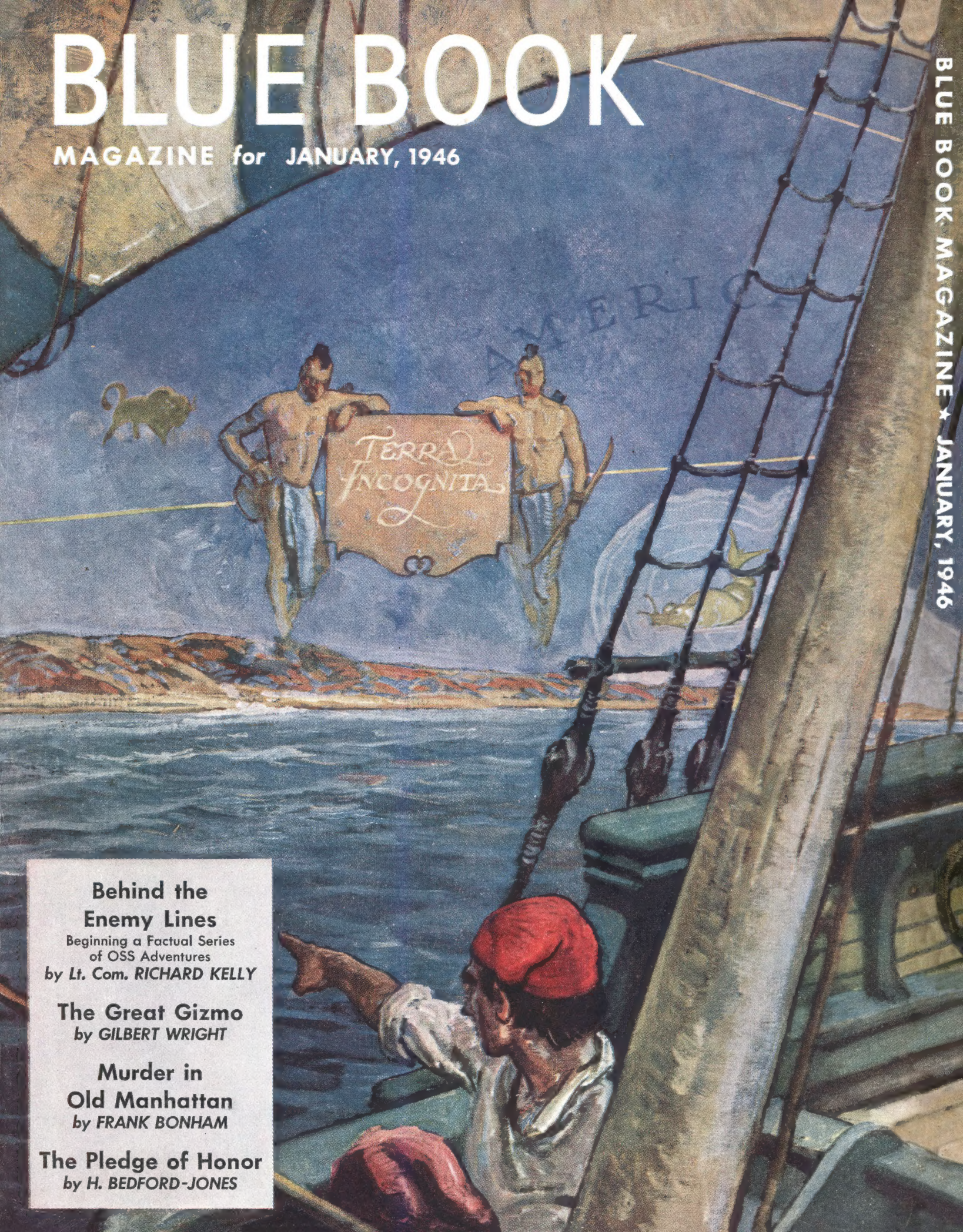
HE was born in New York City, December, 1914, but was educated and received his B.A. in New Jersey. Has been married since 1938.

Before entering the service, he was variously engaged in writing advertising copy and in operating his own business.

He has been in uniform since February, 1943, received his basic training at Parris Island, S. C., and was commissioned at Quantico, Va., May, 1944. Until recently the bulk of his writing was in dramatic form, but since his second trip to the Pacific he has shifted to short stories. At present writing he is serving as a 1st Lieutenant of Marines in the Pacific area.

BLUE BOOK

MAGAZINE for JANUARY, 1946



Behind the Enemy Lines
Beginning a Factual Series of OSS Adventures
by Lt. Com. RICHARD KELLY

The Great Gizmo
by GILBERT WRIGHT

Murder in Old Manhattan
by FRANK BONHAM

The Pledge of Honor
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